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PIERRE-SIMON BALLANCHE'S THEORY OF CULTURAL CHANGES:  
Palingénésie Sociale

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for the Degree of Master of Arts

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### ABSTRACT

The study of Pierre-Simon Ballanche's theory of cultural changes was undertaken to ascertain whether he has or has not been fairly evaluated as a nineteenth century thinker. Extremely scant literature on Ballanche (1766-1847) indicates that he has not been put in perspective correctly. Personal research in the British National Library showed that, apart from some biographical data and a few references to Ballanche with regard to Orphism and as a likely precursor of Victor Hugo, hardly any original enquiry into his work and theories has been conducted.

This study is therefore an attempt to prove that Ballanche's significance in Western European cultural history has been underestimated. The most logical approach was to situate Ballanche in his cultural and social milieu, through a comparative investigation of his thought vis à vis that of his contemporaries and forerunners. This *modus operandi* necessarily entailed an analytical study of the text, which has been preserved in toto and constitutes a total output of some 2 500 pages. Ballanche's theory of history, namely that of cyclical regeneration or palingenesis, suggested that his attitude towards mythology and language should be incorporated in a comparatively analytical study, focussing mainly on his Essai sur les Institutions sociales and the Palingénésie sociale which includes Orphée.

The main areas of investigation of his theory of cultural changes are history, mythology and language. He adopts a biological approach to time, explained by means of immense recurrent cycles. History to Ballanche is essentially social and engenders development. He illustrates this through the myth of Orpheus. Man's past can be described through mythology, he says, because the myth is hieroglyphic, like the Egyptian culture, and open to several interpretations. Through the employ of the myth, Ballanche involves

Christianity in his conception of the primitive past. In his language theory, he claims that the development of history runs parallel with the development of language from an original archetype. Language studies should be linked to mythology and poetry and the oral tradition.

The conclusion of the study is that Ballanche's is an essentially optimistic theory based on social communications. It is valid to say that he is a historiographer, albeit a literary historiographer, whose thought was often original in his day and age and even modern in its anticipation of such twentieth century interpreters of culture as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mircea Eliade. Standing at the crossroads of two eras, Ballanche is a classicist in the emphasis he places on the natural law of palingenesis, and a Romantic in his fascination with Orphism, Egypt and the Orient as mythological vehicles. He bridges two traditions, while additionally pointing towards modern philologic, sociologic, historiographic and mythopoetic notions.

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## INTRODUCTION

### (i) The Dialectic of life and death

Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1766-1847) finds himself at the close of an era that was preoccupied with the rational. The eighteenth century philosophes had given a solid base to human existence by explaining life materially and intellectually. The age of enlightenment was concerned with what could be proved, disputed and phenomenally examined. In total contrast, one very significant section of the nineteenth century would place the spotlight on the irrational, on what could be experienced through the senses and intuition. It is therefore not surprising that they should have given such emphasis to death, which came to play a vital role in the thinking pattern of the new Romantics. Morbidity and melancholy mark the creative output of these thinkers. Their age seems obsessed with the afterlife and whatever lies beyond our immediate surroundings. The cosmos becomes, to them, a vast abyss full of inscrutable mystery, which is nevertheless marvellous. Ballanche is situated at the crossroads of these two eras. He is a man of the eighteenth century in his classical approach to the dialectic of life and death, but a nineteenth century Romantic long before his successors in the way in which he interprets death as dynamic, as a prerequisite catalyst to dialectic development. As the last of the philosophes, Ballanche closes a chapter in history. He intends to furnish man with a reconstructed version of his past, with an explanation of human history. His aim is to prove that there has never been any interruption in the continuity of the foregoing events. This attempt conforms with the systematic approach to all matters philosophical of the Enlightenment thinkers, who wanted to illuminate man on the various aspects of his origins.

The instrument Ballanche uses to explain his Romantic notion



of life through death, is the theory of palingenesis. Rebirth or regeneration, of the soul rather than of the body, is the factor which ensures that the human race is perpetualised. Like the phoenix, the palingenetic symbol par excellence, man rises from the ashes to start a new life. Likewise, whole nations are reborn to start a new age, usually after some devastating event. The demise of a race merely signifies the inauguration of a new era, a new cycle.

(ii) Palingenesis: Cyclical rebirth and history

All sacred and profane histories are analogous and part of an identical cycle. (1) Ballanche's objective is to write the general history of mankind, to prove that there exists unanimity in the general cultural traditions of the human race. They are all part of one great development towards perfectibility. The means to understand all of past history, is to include it in a cyclical theory. Cyclical theories of history date from very long ago. A general concept of a continually repetitive circular movement consisting of various ages, was upheld for a long time before periodisation was detached from it. In many of the archaic traditions, great religions and philosophical systems such as Brahmanism, Buddhism and Platonism, the world, man and nature are conceived of in terms of cyclical time. The theme of seasonal renewal influenced the notion of great cycles, which can be seen in the labours and festivities of human existence, as well as the regularity of celestial bodies. The great historic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, conceive of cyclical time as a variant of linear time, in that it progresses toward some goal and is not ever-recurrent with no outcome. Grace Cairns, in the Philosophies of History (2), has explained that all cycle theories can be divided into three basic groups: that of cosmic cycles, that of one grand cycle, and that of culture cycles. The middle concept of one grand cycle belongs essentially to the Christian, Hebrew, Moslem and Zoroastrian traditions, which adhere to the notion of a Golden Age or Eden with a return to the kingdom of God or Paradise.

Ballanche combines the last two conceptions, in that he conceives of one grand cycle but places much emphasis on several culture cycles or ages, all of which develop progressively towards an infinite ending. To Ballanche, his cycle starts at a definite point in time, with creation ex nihilo, but does not come to a definite stop. His is a theory of cultural changes, operating under the "indomptable loi du

progrès" (3). The theory is based on his philosophico-religious Weltanschauung, which explains Ballanche's mythical and symbolic interpretation of time cycles. His religious orientation stands in contrast with the Enlightenment's secular, materialist notion of progress through reason and science. Ballanche rather envisages the meaning and goals of cosmic and human history in terms of a spiritual unity between East and West, or the similarities between various religions. The real nature of time has always been a riddle to man, from the earliest civilisations on. The Babylonians wrote about annual and seasonal cycles, mainly related to the Nile, in the Gilgamesh Epic already in 2000 B.C. In the Indian cultural tradition, the Hindu belief entertained a vision of "quiet" periods in the past, the so-called nights of Brahma. The Buddhists believed in a cycle of destruction, continued destruction, renovation and continued renovation, *ad infinitum*. The Greeks spoke of a wheel of time that turned continually and forever bound man to his fate. The idea of cyclical recurrence was probably inherited by the Ionian Greeks from the Persian empire under Cyrus which included a part of India. Pythagoras, while in Ionia, became acquainted with these ideas, says Gomperz in Greek Thinkers\*. Hesiod, in the eighth century B.C., spoke of five great cycles or ages in his Works and Days. The Pythagoreans (sixth century B.C.) founded their naturalistic cyclical theory on the astronomical idea of the Great Year of the universe, when all heavenly bodies and the earth would return to the same relative positions. Their cyclical conception of ever-recurrent cycles was based on astronomy and the definite relationship between the earth and heavenly bodies. They gave a mathematical interpretation to the everlasting recurrence in cycles of the same events, things and persons. Plato also links cycles to heavenly bodies in the Timaeus, in which he speaks of the degeneration and decline of a culture, creating a cyclical, culturally historically repetitive pattern, consisting of a rise, a climax and a degeneration.

\* see Cairns, Grace: Philosophies of History, p206.

All cycles were not identical. In the De Generatione et corruptione and in his Politics, Aristotle applied the cyclical conception of time to social life and described cultural patterns analogous to the individual social organisation. Aristotle claimed that coming-to-be and passing-away had to be everlasting because their cause was eternal. He gave a formulation of his cyclical approach to the dynamics of nature and human culture, based on the precept that water changed into air, air into fire, and fire into water, a circular change, perpetuously. In the Politics he ascribed sociocultural cycles to social organisation, divided into two strands: family, and the different nature in different types of men, which would determine leadership.

The Stoics upheld that the same features of the same world cycles are repeated in every detail. The authorities on Stoic cycle theories are too late to establish definite sources or dates, but Nemesius (fifth century) said the same things would be restored without end. Seneca, in the Quaestiones naturales, foresaw, like Hesiod, inevitable destruction at the end of a cycle. The Epicureans believed in eternal recurrence through all imaginable combinations of atoms. Ovid entertained a notion of distinct ages in the Metamorphoses, when he speaks of the Golden Age of Cronos/Saturn, and the corrupt age of Zeus as that of modern man. Opposed to Ovid's view of a progressive degeneration in time, Virgil, in the Aeneid, Eclogues and Georgics, advocated a return to the Golden Age through a cycle of periods, the new era of peace to have been inaugurated by Augustus.

The conception of a return to Paradise and the coming kingdom of God is central to the Hebrew and Christian traditions, which regard history as an unpleasant but necessary interim in which certain souls are saved for the return to God. St Augustine, in the City of God, says that the cycle is completed only by a chosen few. The mythographer Fulgentius (d.532/3) published a historiographical summary known as On the Ages of the World and of Man, which was a source book

from the ninth to the seventeenth century at least.

Fulgentius separated the ages of the world itself and the age of mankind and said that both could be explained through regular cycles, consisting of 23 letter symbols congruous with natural laws. So for example he believed the world to be made up of 23 periods of time, and man's life span of 23 periods of five years each. Another thinker who was concerned with the reckoning of time and who saw the world in cyclical terms was <sup>venerable</sup> Bede (672/3-735), who popularised the method of dating events from the incarnation of Christ, i.e. A.D., in the Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum (731/2).

Avicenna (d.1037) stated, like the Muslim belief, that there is a cycle of progression of the soul from a lesser to various higher states. Like Ballanche, he held spirit alone to be immortal, rejecting bodily resurrection. He demonstrated the rational soul's separateness from the body by saying that the former is at its most powerful in old men whose bodies are decaying. Almost four centuries before Vico, the great Moslem historian Ibn Khaldun called history a social science in the Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History (completed 1377), and traced the rise and fall of civilisations and dynasties. Vico (1668-1744), the Italian philosopher, was the first to periodise time concretely by proposing a theory of three ages, which was apparently borrowed from the Egyptians, according to Herodotus. The Scienza Nuova (1725, revised 1730) attempted to make history a sociological science, by describing the rise and fall of a civilisation, as caused by the neglect of religion and morals. The historiographers of the eighteenth century conceived of history as a social science, like Vico did, and based their theory of the past on the principle of natural laws. Ballanche's concern with the application of laws to our existence is restricted to mythical and metaphysical analysis of the changes inherent in culture/society. His approach foreshadows the symbolic approach to cultural cycles of Oswald Spengler in The Decline of the West, the mythologising of the infinite into scientific symbolic forms by Ernst Cassirer in Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, and the eternal

cyclical pattern of ideational-idealistic-sensate upheld by  
Pitirim Sorokin in The Crisis of our Age.

(iii) Ballanche's mythological approach to cultural cycles

Ballanche was familiar with all of the above-mentioned cycle theories, due to the increased contact between the West and the East in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Much information about the Indian philosophies and also the Chinese was disseminated throughout Europe. The Indian philosophy of time and eternity had been revealed to him through the Ramayana, which reinforced his belief that all myths of the ancient world recounted the same Golden Age. The Western and Greek approach to time and history was rationalistic, unlike the Indian and Chinese which was intuitive. For Ballanche, they all started with a mythopoetic approach, in order to ascertain the pattern of cosmic history. It is unlikely that Ballanche knew of the eleventh century theory of the Chinese that history consisted of endlessly repeated cosmic cycles, which were a synthesis of historic and nature cycles. This fully developed theory, however, became apparent to Ballanche in the Indian Buddhist philosophy. (see Appendix I) The Zoroastrian view of one great year which had an absolute beginning and an absolute ending, when the cycle comes full swing to the beginning with a return to a paradise more secure and blissful than before, came to Ballanche's attention through the illuminist writers of his day, such as Saint-Martin. He adapted it to his own viewpoint of a set beginning, without a determined ending of time.

Ballanche states that the history of the universe consists initially of solar years, which are lost in immense cycles (4). He adheres to the mythological as opposed to scientific conception of history, saying that at certain times in the past, particular acts are clearly defined in human terms and so become the possession of all mankind. Myth becomes the means to express the past while being the essence of history.

The study of myth was given a firm footing around 1800, with the growing fascination of the Romantics for human speech,

the postulation of an Indo-European language family, the study of Sanskrit, and the growth of comparative studies, especially in history and philology. The English Orientalist Sir William Jones (1746-94) proposed a hypothesis in 1786 that Sanskrit, Greek and Latin sprung from a common source, which perhaps no longer existed. Germanic, Old Persian and Celtic were all possibly descendant from an archetype. Pioneer research was conducted by Max Muller (1823-1900) who did comparative Indo-European language studies, wrote essays on mythology in The Sacred Books of the East (1875) and held the chair of comparative philology at Oxford. The formal establishment of comparative historical, linguistic and religious doctrines on a cross-cultural basis later in the nineteenth century was foreshadowed by an intuitive approach such as Ballanche displayed in his language theory of an original archetype. Drawing knowledge from the seventeenth century discoveries in astronomy and the eighteenth century enquiries into the laws of existence, as well as the rediscovery of Egyptian culture, Ballanche was inspired by mythological accounts of repetitions of worlds after their destruction, following movements in the sky and by the image of transcendence. The immutable order in the course of the sun, moon and stars suggests a time that transcends man's. That "transcendental" time came to be seen as eternity, and Ballanche realised that myths were concerned with the relationship between eternity and time on earth, and thus constituted the essence of history. The German pioneer of linguistics, Wilhelm Humboldt (1767-1835), a contemporary of Ballanche, pointed out the interrelationship between language and culture in Über den Dualis (1828), which contained the metaphysic thesis that man perceives the world through language. Ballanche regarded language and the myth as the original form of language, as dynamic, as an activity in itself, as a key to history. This approach was highly original in the France of his day, which did not readily join in the enthusiasm for comparative linguistics.

Ballanche is looking for a point of departure for history. He



finds this in the start of the Olympiads, because they are an event in a particular local history, which can be described in material and phenomenal terms, unlike general history, which appears as a vague mass of happenings. While the beginning of history is linked to the institution of the Olympiads, Ballanche maintains that the moment of cultural change is obscure. When traditions become history, and poetry becomes prose, we do not know, for there is hardly a trace of cyclical evolution. All that remains of the change, is "la mémoire du seul fait symbolisé (qui) brille dans la nuit des âges." (5) A symbol, a myth, the most concise version of the transition from one age to another, remains, but to modern man, this requires explanation and clarification. Ballanche hopes that one day, myths about man's past would be interpreted with the same ease as Prosper de Barante writes the French national chronicles, in other words, that the myth would be granted validity and accepted generally. (6)

Although Ballanche does not attempt to define the time of the moments of change, he can imagine what such a palingenetic epoch must have been like. The physical world was in disorder, the elements were without bounds and on this earth caused floods, fires and falling rocks, and in the skies meteoric movement took place. Such was the palingenetic change of an age, but it is not known when it took place, says Ballanche.

When the Olympiads were instituted, marking "le commencement des temps historiques," (7) time disengaged itself from the unlimited and became known to man.

"Par-tout le temps se dégage de l'éternité; le fini de l'infini, l'occident de l'Orient, le connu de l'inconnu; l'histoire du mythe." (8)

This series of superimposed categories are illuminating as to Ballanche's conception of the known and the unknown. One can divide them into two separate strands of conception:

temps	éternité
fini	infini

occident	Orient
connu	inconnu
histoire	mythe

To Ballanche, time is synonymous with a conception of the finite. Time is material, it is something that can be measured. Time is associated with what is known, with history, with the Occidental civilisation. Opposed to this stands a conception of eternity, which is infinite, cannot be measured and is unknown. Eternity is mythical and is associated with the Orient. The unknown, to Ballanche, is not that which cannot be known, but that which is not yet known. Eternity is therefore not something that will never be sounded, but merely an entity which awaits explanation, when we have been sufficiently illuminated to do so. While we can explain the past of the Western civilisation, we cannot yet do so with all of Eastern civilisation, therefore we use the myth to elucidate us as regards what will one day be wholly clarified.

(iv) An ancient past and an infinite future

Certain parts of human history were not meant to be understood by general man. General man stands opposed to illuminated man, such as a poet, or such as Ballanche himself. Like many of the Romantics, Ballanche believed that he had been illuminated by God to a higher sphere of initiation in the fantastic voyage towards our origins than his fellows. Convinced that God had a special mission with him, he said the poet was involved in a higher sphere than ordinary man. Special gifts allowed him to see the whole, instead of the part. Profound causes and hidden origins were revealed to him. As a prophet and an augur, he was the living expression of God, of things, and of men.

Ballanche says:

"La Providence s'occupe beaucoup des personnages qu'elle destine à une grande mission. La puissance qui leur est confiée est une puissance de sympathie, car il ne faut pas que la liberté humaine soit jamais blessée." (9)

He believes that he has been divinely inspired, like Virgil or Dante, to whom he compares himself:

"Le génie audacieux du Dante conçut un projet semblable à celui qui m'occupe." (10)

Ballanche is aware that it is not a facile faculty to act as an illuminated poet. The ability to see in the past or the future had to be developed by study, education and meditation. The essential factor was, however, to have the initial gift. (11)

All the astronomical cycles of the past, which have remained secret to the most enterprising imaginations and scientific enquiries, embraced palingenetic periods, but of different globes in infinity. These periods and cycles were times of purification, of tests, of hope and despair. They belonged to a realm of pure intellect, before becoming ages of man. (12)

The idea of a system of tests comes from Ballanche's illuminist contemporary Saint-Martin, who upholds in his

L'Homme de désir (1790) that we enter a higher degree of initiation through a series of tests. Ballanche's theory is also indebted to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, which allows man to be elevated provided that he becomes worthy thereof.

Ballanche says that a corollary to his doctrine of cultural changes exists in primitive Latin, which comprises many words explanatory of this antique chain of events, to which we are attached through the ancient Orient. (13) He blames the confusion of astrology with religion on the manifold interpretations of the words century and eternity, found in old Latin. Time had become an image of eternity, because we had not been able to grasp the conception "eternity". There are missing parts or links which seem lost, but are not however. Man is simply not able to decipher them. Ballanche says that there were three male sibyls who lived on earth during an unknown cycle, when they guarded the secret of lost religions. Ballanche proposes that what they spoke of with relation to the gods, could be applied equally to man. So, for example, the religious laws that governed the gods, were the same as those that ruled over man. The perennial fountains on this earth were a mirror of the Styx. The cities of mortals were modelled on the city of Olympus. Everything was a repetition of an original model, so too, were men.

According to the Mysteries, oracles were rendered by ancient virae, who had lived during a cycle of which we do not have knowledge and they disposed of superior knowledge than that of man. They also did not age like mortal man. (14) In other cycles, other laws rule over life and death. This does not imply that those cycles were not part of our history. All the parts compose one great human historical cycle, which begins with the Creation, develops with the fall from grace, and will eventuate in the return to the Golden Age.

This theory of Ballanche is indebted to Vico, with whose work he became acquainted during a trip to Italy in 1823-4.

To the provisional edition of Orphée (published 1828, started 1818), Ballanche added Vico's treatise De antiqua Italorum sapientia, ex linguae latinae originibus eruenda. According to Ballanche, his main debt to Vico lies in the metaphysic application of philology to penetrate the depths of antiquity. Ballanche is of the opinion, like Vico, that the development of language is paralleled by the development of societies. If one therefore studied the history of language, one could apply it to the history of man. However, the division of history into cycles is evidence that Vico played a far more influential role in the development of Ballanche's theory of cultural changes than in the field of philology, to which Ballanche refers as an illustration of his theory, but to which he makes no contribution regarding the development of a science.

Vico's theory emphasises an "ideal eternal history", in which each nation has its own path (corso) which includes a rise, development and fall. The same pattern can be distinguished in for example Greek, Egyptian and Roman cultures. Although this did not occur concurrently, the same pattern was repeated. This resulted in Ballanche's theory of cycles. Ballanche says that each nation is subject to a certain predetermined pattern of historical development. He speaks of a nation or a race as if it is an individual, typifying the race and its successors as though it were a mythical person. (15)

These patterns are always the same and appear in the form of cycles. A cycle is an age. To Vico, there were three ages of mankind, that of the Gods, that of the Heroes, and that of Man. Ballanche similarly divided the past into three cycles, that of the mythological, heroic and historic times respectively. While Vico says that when the age of man comes to an end, there would be a return to barbarism and primitivism, Ballanche does not envisage a reversion to an inferior state, and he does not hold the foregoing to be barbaric. Man's progression is marked by forward and upward

dialectic toward the future and eternal world, with no place for regression. The cycle always gets nearer to the original Golden Age.

NOTES\*: INTRODUCTION

(ii) Palingenesis: Cyclical rebirth and history

(1)"le genre humain, dans son ensemble, ne forme en quelque sorte qu'un seul tout ... Mais cette haute doctrine, qui fait la base de toutes les religions..." I.S., 47.

(2)Cairns, Grace, Philosophies of History, Peter Owen, London, 1963.

(3)Première addition, 8.

(iii) Ballanche's mythological approach to cultural cycles

(4)"Une année solaire se fond, et se perd, pour ainsi dire, dans des cycles immenses formés par le concours des astres." Première addition, 18.

(5)Première addition, 5.

(6)"Un jour peut-être, lorsque nous serons accoutumés à cette sorte d'histoire contenue dans le mythe, on l'écrira aussi facilement que M. de Barante écrit nos chroniques nationales." Première addition, 12.

(7)Première addition, 18.

(8)ibid.

(iv) An ancient past and an infinite future

(9)Orphée II, 128.

(10)P.S., 5.

(11)"Voir malgré le voile des objets intérieurs, voir au travers de l'illusion des sens, voir par-delà l'horizon des faits actuels, soit dans le passé, soit dans l'avenir, c'est une faculté qui se développe dans l'homme par l'étude, l'éducation, l'habitude de méditer; elle se développe comme toutes les autres facultés, lorsque d'ailleurs on en est doué." Orphée VII, 114.

(12)"ils ont été des âges pour les intelligences pures avant d'être des âges pour le genre humain, pour les diverses sociétés humaines." Première addition, 19.

(13)"la langue latine primitive, où l'on trouve encore

quelques anneaux usés de cette chaîne antique par laquelle nous fûmes attachés au roc immobile du vieil Orient." *ibid.*

(14) "Elles ont vécu sur la terre un cycle inconnu" Orphée I, 115.

(15) "il est bon de se rappeler que les Indiens et les Chinois prennent collectivement une race comme un individu. L'enfant céleste, le type de la race, agit dans tous ses successeurs. Les actions des ancêtres et des descendants sont toutes mises sur le compte de ce personnage qu'on pourrait nommer mythique." Orphée I, 72.



\* Quotations from Ballanche's oeuvre are taken from the Oeuvres Complètes, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1967. They are abbreviated as follows:

I.S.: Essai sur les Institutions Sociales (volume I)

P.S.: Palingénésie Sociale (volume IV) which includes the text of Orphée.

Première addition aux Prolégomènes, Orphée I-V (volume V).

Orphée VI-IX, Epilogue (volume VI).

## CHAPTER 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF TIME, AN AGE AND A CYCLE

### (i) A Biological approach to time

The nature of time is a central matter in Ballanche's philosophy, because by establishing what the concept time means to him, his treatment of history becomes clearer. Ballanche points out that in the Orient, time is unlimited and therefore imposes simplicity on whatever events happened in the past. To the Hebrew people, time is restricted, and is denominated into weeks and years. The Olympians had an even more restricted view of time. They applied a local cosmogony instead of a general cosmogony by contemplating the sun relative to our earth only. Their viewpoint, however, marks the beginning of historic time, and Ballanche is of the opinion that this happened at the same time as the founding of Rome. Ballanche deducts that when time disengaged itself from eternity, history disengaged itself from myth. Time nevertheless remains an image of eternity. (1) The further back one delves into the past, "plus l'on trouve illimitée la supputation des temps" (2). The evaluation of time to Ballanche is an indirect operation, concerning a quantity of which we have some information, but not all.

His interpretation of time is a biological one. He conceives of time as long, slow cycles, just like the biological vision of the past as a slow evolution, with certain missing links in the continuum. During the eighteenth century, the body was regarded as a clock, consisting of various parts, which may be cycles, provided cycle is read in a mechanical sense. The Baron d'Holbach (1723-89) wrote in the Système de la nature (1770) that man was a machine devoid of free will and that the only reality was matter in motion. Time constituted the necessary laws according to which the human mind and its sensations functioned as a relationship of motion. Julien de La Mettrie (1709-51) also extolled a materialist theory of existence, in L'Homme-machine (1747). Researches into the

history of biology, such as those undertaken by Linnaeus (1707-78) in the Systema naturae (1735) and Lamarck (1744-1829) in Hydrogéologie (1802), instead influenced Ballanche's assumptions about the nature of time and matter. Ballanche supported a very different viewpoint than did the materialists.

For Ballanche, foregoing time, which has baffled so many scientists, does not consist of astronomic time, but of palingenetic time. He acknowledges his debt to Charles Bonnet (1720-93) in the usage of the word palingenesis. Bonnet, who had inherited it from Leibniz, used the term palingenesis in a naturalistic sense, and wrote a treatise called Palingénésie philosophique, ou idées sur l'état passé et sur l'état futur des êtres vivants (1768). He included all living beings in a system of future rebirth. Bonnet spoke of the perfectibility of faculties, not only of humans and animals, but also of plants. He wrote about the origin, growth and reproduction of organised beings, the universe, God. Bonnet was the precursor of the modern biological meaning of the term palingenesis, which signifies the exact reproduction of ancestral features by inheritance. As such, it is the opposite of kenogenesis, in which the inherited characteristics are modified by the environment. (3)

Ballanche turned to Bonnet for inspiration for his theory of progress and social change, a peaceful alternative to revolution. Throughout the Palingénésie sociale, which includes Orphée, Ballanche follows Bonnet in giving a review of evolution through reincarnation or metempsychosis, a continuous series of deaths and rebirths to which all living things are subject. The main difference that Ballanche's employ of the word entails, is that he did not accept physical transformation in the modern, Darwinian evolutionary sense, to which Bonnet is partial. For Ballanche, only essence could be regenerated by death. Man's body was created perfect and would die so. (4) He uses his theory of the word as original creation together with the creation of man, to

refute the argument that man originally comes from an oyster, a view generally held by the materialist philosophers. (5)

While Ballanche refuses to accept that man had undergone a physical transformation, he believes that the earth had experienced several developmental stages in that the creatures inhabiting it, were of different species at particular ages. A certain amount of Diderot (1713-84) can be discerned in Ballanche's evolutionary assumptions. The editor of the Encyclopédie deduced from his biological studies of different species that there was regularity and conformity to laws governing the physical universe. Diderot applied his theory to conceive of an evolutionary transformism that contained the principle of change and continuity. The analogy with nature convinced Diderot of individual human perfectibility, but he was skeptical regarding social improvement.

The belief in natural harmony and rational humanity displayed the progressive element inherent in the Enlightenment thought, namely power associated with knowledge. The generation of the philosophes had for the first time insight into earlier times, because of the development of science. Ballanche is of the opinion that the new sciences, geology and archeology, enabled man to research the passage of time. He says that we should dig and look on the soil for the faded footprints of "proto-anciens", a race that existed before the ancients. Geology, he says, informed us that man was new on the earth, and that idea preceded fact. He admires Leibniz (1646-1716) whose unfinished work Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain, a critique of An Essay concerning human understanding by Locke (1632-1704), proposed that the history of man was linked to the history of the earth. He agrees with Charles Bonnet's comments on Leibniz's optimistic theory of the best of all possible worlds, which was developed extensively by Hegel (1770-1831). Ballanche shows that he thinks in the pattern of Hegel, an idealistic mode, saying

things exist a priori:

"Nous savons que tout est sous une forme indéfinie avant d'être sous une forme circonscrite." (6)

A la Linnaeus, the founder of the modern biological nomenclature of species and genera, Ballanche talks of species who have developed from a destructive nature. Linnaeus' exposition of the development of life in the natural state, published in 1735 (Systema naturae) and his distinction between species and genera in Genera plantarum (1737) and Species plantarum (1753), had opened new vistas in evolutionary study. He maintains that all species have a different aspect, which has changed in time. The proof lies in fossils that were discovered in caves in various places as archeological research became more extensive in the nineteenth century.

"Les entassements d'animaux fossiles dans des cavernes que l'on découvre en divers lieux annoncent qu'à une époque où l'homme n'existait pas encore les animaux étaient comme sont les poissons de la mer." (7)

Ballanche admits to a time when there was life on earth, but not yet human life. He adopts the modern evolutionary theory made popular by Charles Darwin in the 1850s. In Ballanche's own time, though, there had been some discussion of evolution, amongst others by Montesquieu (1689-1755), who accepted the possibility that species might change into other species, and that there was some kind of transmutation. Montesquieu followed Vico in stating that there were natural laws relating to humanity and society. In De l'Esprit des Lois (1748), he studied history to establish the laws of social change. Diderot had spoken about one prototype, one primeval animal, from which we all had a common descent, but were altered by nature. Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), Charles' grandfather, had already in 1794 mentioned that an evolution had occurred, and made reference to the chrysalis which turned into a moth and the tadpole which turned into a frog, in the Zoonomia or the laws of organic life (1794-6), in which he expounded the same concepts of evolution as Lamarck,

stating that species adapted to their environment in a purposive manner. Erasmus Darwin was a transitional figure between the eighteenth century materialists and the more sophisticated nineteenth century scientists, like Ballanche, who also bridged the gap between two modes of thinking about man's cultural changes.

Lamarck was another pioneer biologist in the formative era of that science. He was the first to use the word "biology" in 1802. Lamarck said that evolution occurred as new characteristics were acquired through the interaction with the environment, then passed on to progeny. Ballanche also mentioned the acquisition of new characteristics by a species, but limited it to the animal realm. This theory was opposed to Darwin's thesis of genetically determined variations selected by competition, and resulted in a controversy in the middle of the nineteenth century. Lamarck wrote a history of the earth, called the Hydrogéologie, characterised by a series of inundations by a global sea. He perceived geological time to be vast and said that time was insignificant and not a hamper to nature, who made use of time as a representation of the unlimited power with which she accomplishes her greatest and smallest tasks. Lamarck pointed out that there were so many similarities between varieties of species, that one could construct an evolutionary tree from microanimals to man, with branches indicating a community of ancestry.

To Ballanche, man appeared, ready-made, to dominate the animal world:

"Dès le moment où l'homme a paru, les animaux ont eu un dominateur intelligent." (8)

While man made the earth his own, a cosmogonic age passed slowly. Man's original and successive manifestations were gradual, he says, germinating in a massive time span.

"De plus, c'est une très courte vue de croire que l'on fonde un établissement religieux et politique comme l'on bâtit une maison; que l'on fait une religion comme

une hypothèse philosophique. Soyez certain que nous ne rencontrerez jamais une origine avec cette courte vue."  
(9)

Ballanche speaks in the idiom of the German idealists like Kant (1724-1804), who conceives of time and human history as slow and continuous, in his essay The Idea of a universal history on a cosmopolitan plan (1784). The author of the Palingénésie Sociale was impressed by and concerned with solutions to theoretical problems regarding time and matter, unlike the French philosophes who attempted to establish materialist facts, and the British who attempted to illuminate concrete economic issues. The belief in slow development and gradual social progress, Ballanche shared with the British philosophers and historians, unlike the French who still thought in terms of drastic change, anticipating the Revolution. Ballanche's theory was concerned with systems of thought and change, not with social upheaval.

In addition to conceiving of time as a very slow, evolving concept, Ballanche sees time as being ideal. Because the world consisted of palingenetic time, Ballanche says, one should not try to establish a positive chronology of the primitive past, but accept that it was an ideal cyclical time. He is of the opinion that Newton (1642-1727) had made the mistake of trying to explain ideal time through astronomy. Ideal time is elevated above astronomical cycles or great solar years, for ideal time is eternity. By unsuccessfully trying to give time a historical aspect, we emphasize its eternal nature, because we can never succeed in expressing it phenomenally.

One definition of time that Ballanche allows, is that of an age. He describes it as a period consisting of many astronomic cycles, filling the globe that we inhabit and also the many other globes all over the infinite space. He has cosmic visions of grandeur on unlimited scale. (10) Following

Vico when he speaks of ideal time and ideal chronology, Ballanche refers to the established order of time, the succession of events as has been predetermined. Because it has been set by a superior being, namely God the Creator, time is ideal and cannot be bettered. Consequently, it repeats itself incessantly in a palingenetic movement. A revealing statement about Ballanche's belief that man's history and destiny are cyclical, is made when he says:

"La chronologie idéale a cet avantage qu'elle s'applique à tous les âges. Ainsi nous pouvons remarquer une analogie avec la mouvement palingénésique actuel de la France, par où commence celui de l'Europe!" (11)

The palingenesis taking place at Ballanche's epoch was a transition from dominance by the Orient, which had become stationary and was represented by the patricians, to dominance by the West, marked by its progressive aspect and represented by the plebeians. Ballanche speaks in the idiom of a child of the Revolution, who has become aware of society as a living, dynamic entity, when he applies his theory of cultural change to the present. When he discusses the remote past and the remote future, he is much more of an idealist.

After 1789, the rise of the plebeian class in France seemed to herald a new, progressive age, with the ideals of the French Revolution proclaimed generally. Liberty, equality, fraternity for all became the yardstick whereby the new society would be measured. While social classes were not wholly abandoned, they became more fluid and allowed the plebeians social progress vis à vis the patricians, or in other terms, the working and the bourgeois classes both experienced social mobility to their own advantage. The preoccupation with society and classes gave rise to a new science that would be concerned exclusively with the study of society as a phenomenon of human existence: sociology.

Having established what ideal time means in Ballanche's idiom, it is also necessary to distinguish how he measures time. His viewpoint is that time is part of and identical to



eternity. Time is characterised as continuous and immobile. It is a fixture in the cosmos, because it is always and has always been. It is also fluid, because it never stops. It is measurable because of the succession of our ideas, because of the signs that we attach to our ideas, and yet it is independent of ideas. (12)

It is thus the mind that makes time manifest. Time has always been there, but became apparent only when man gave thought to it. Our denominations of time do not constitute time, they measure time. Because man wants to fix a conception of time, he clothes it in terms of astronomic cycles.(13) These cycles are creations of his imagination, nobody has imposed them, they are mere instruments to facilitate man's conception of time and history. They are not real time - real time is the same as eternity and the cosmos.

"L'éternité sans limite me faisait comprendre l'espace également sans limite." (14)

Time and space are equally illimited. The conception of the one facilitates the comprehension of the other. Variable and apparently successive time resides in eternity. Time is not a fixed phenomenon, it changes with the passing thereof. Similarly, space is not fixed, it is a fluid abode for transmutable and palingenetic bodies. The two modes, that of time and that of the body, have no reality apart from that given to it by our "sens fragiles et fugitifs" (15).

Ballanche's theory comes close to that of Condillac (1715-80), that given sensation, all the rest of human experience follows. In the Essai sur l'Origine des connaissances humaines (1746), Condillac gave a systematic expression of the theory of Locke, previously made fashionable in France by Voltaire, called empirical sensationism. This was based on the principle that observations made by sense perception are the foundation of human knowledge. In the Traité des Sensations (1754), Condillac proposed that all human knowledge was transformed

by sensation, to the exclusion of any other principle, such as the additional principle of reflection that Locke suggested. In the opening of the Essai, Condillac said that we always perceived our own thoughts, which resided within ourselves. This became the basis of the French philosophical ideology which influenced Ballanche.

Ballanche's attitude to time is mostly idealist and falls in the tradition of Condillac, with which Ballanche became familiar through a group of philosophers called "Les Idéologues". He refutes post-Enlightenment thought by standing up for the value of the interplay of appearances, for the infinite possibility to discover meaning through intuition. Poetry and meditation are two vehicles for arriving at a comprehension of the world. Ballanche is leading a controversy against the rise of ideologies as systems of explanation. He is truly a middle-man, for although he expresses himself against dogmatic doctrine, he shares a common attitude about cultural legacies with "les Idéologues", the French philosophical movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Named by Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836), with the Marquis de Condorcet, Maine de Biran and P-J-G Cabanis as active members, the "Idéologues" believed in the perfectibility of the human race and said that the senses generated all sentiments. Through analysis of ideas they viewed Condillac's sensationism as generative of the total range of psychic and spiritual elements, including social, moral and political sentiments, through successive composition. Ballanche, familiar with the philosophy and the philosophers, expounded a theory that has many similarities with the social and political "idéologie" of Destutt de Tracy: both were concerned with explaining human experience and the external world, both believed that although their philosophy was aimed at a wide public, it would essentially be of significance to intellectual leaders. The knowledge of ideas, as in the epistemology of Locke and Condillac, was applied to improve the knowledge of life on earth and the life of mankind on earth through science, as Bacon had

proposed.

In Éléments d'idéologie (1801-15), Destutt de Tracy emphasised the physiological nature of sensation, concluding that human thought was merely an elaboration of sensations, an activity of the nervous system. The four principal realms of conscious behaviour - perception, memory, judgment and will - he considered to be various combinations of sensations. This refinement of Condillac's sensationism threatened both religious doctrine and secular authority, resulting in the suppression of the "Idéologues" theory by Napoleon from 1803 onwards. Ballanche was much influenced by Destutt de Tracy's attempt at unmasking the historicity of ideas in order to yield a true and universal knowledge of human nature. The "Idéologue" treated the history of the contents and evolution of the human mind as a species of zoology, inaugurating a "natural history of ideas", which presented a contradiction: his theme was materialistic, yet his purpose was normative. Comte would also conceive of a branch of "positive science" to be devoted to the evolution of the human mind as a "social" process. Ballanche did not dare go this far in his attempt to analyse man's comprehension and experience of his past. His is not a materialistic approach, nor does it show signs of becoming a sociology of knowledge. Ballanche adopts the Orphic road to illumination.

What distinguishes Ballanche's thought from that of the post-Enlightenment "Idéologues", is that he wants to explain rather than change the world. Destutt de Tracy united a programmatic and an intellectual approach to the development of social man, forming a "science of ideas" or a science with a mission: to serve men, even save them, by preparing them for reason without prejudice. Ballanche is, although not in a materialist manner, still operating in the vein of explanatory philosophy, yet he has developed and extended eighteenth century thought through invoking a new dimension of explanation: the intuitive or the metaphoric. Although he

recognises the value of national education and state planning, advocated by Destutt de Tracy and briefly executed under the Directory (1795-9), Ballanche does not intend to transform France into a rational, scientific society. His is a search for moral and intellectual happiness, to be effected through Orphic illumination of cultural changes throughout the ages.

At the end of the eighteenth century a controversy raged concerning the nature of time. The question was put whether time was a category of the mind, or a deduction of our senses. Hegel (1770-1831) maintained that time existed a priori, that time was an outside, external phenomenon that existed even when there was nothing else. This idealist view was also held by Leibniz and Kant. Before Hegel, Kant had stated that space and time were a priori categories which structure our sensory experience. In the Critique of Pure Reason (1781) Kant explained that a priori elements entered into all aspects of human knowledge, but said that they were synthetic in adding to our knowledge through features not given in our experience. Hegel, in the Phänomenologie des Geistes (1807) saw fundamental reality not as matter, but mind, of which matter is one manifestation. Absolute mind is dynamic and develops in an orderly, dialectic pattern, he stated in the Wissenschaft der Logik (1812-16), with ever-increasing complexity. His positive theory of development and evolution of mind and matter, thought and universe, influenced Ballanche's position regarding the nature of time. Ballanche was inclined to the abstract analysis of German idealism, based on the metaphysical rather than the factual. He says:

"Les climats, les génies des peuples, donnés, le problème historique pourrait se résoudre a priori: ceci nous présenterait une image de la prescience de Dieu."  
(16)

The opposite view, that of time as an a posteriori phenomenon, was upheld by the rationalists, who included

Descartes and Spinoza, saying that time exists due to our mind. They were of the opinion that time or reality was only validated because of how we conceive of it intellectually. In the Discours de la méthode (1637), Descartes had stated that in order to project mathematical order into the physical world, the mind had to be detached from the senses. Truth was not in sense perception, but in pure intellect. Spinoza (1632-77) also contrasted ratio with sense perception in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (1670) and said that the mind formed its own idea of time, making it an a posteriori phenomenon. In the Principles of Cartesian philosophy, he contended that beyond ratio was an a priori intuitive knowledge, but it was concerned with regarding God as the eternal. Leibniz, in the Discourse on Metaphysics, stands between the two opposing sides of the controversy, by proposing a symbolic logic stemming from innate logic, constantly changing, because it expresses perception, which is confused and indistinct and differs from person to person. He thus allows a logical, but subjective, evaluation of time, like Ballanche does, but he would be less rationalistic. Both Leibniz and Ballanche adopted a hermetic approach to logic, founded on the art of memory and expressed in the oral tradition.

Ballanche says senses are the prerequisite instrument to give identity to time and space. The world of the senses does not require thought or feelings, as does the material world. This is why life on earth makes it so difficult for us to understand anything about life outside earth. Here we are fettered by the combination of intelligence and sentiment, whereas we should let ourselves be guided outside of these considerations, by instinctual intelligence alone.

"ainsi je comprenais comment, pour l'intelligence  
dégagée des organes, le passé, le présent, l'avenir,  
sont contemporains." (17)

The past, the present and the future would all be one if we could let our instinct rule. Because mankind cannot

accomplish this general contemplation of time, we divide the past into cycles.

The cycles of time are patterned as follows: Initially there was a God who created the world, to be populated by gods. This was the first defined age and followed the time when there was only a world of essences. When God created a world of substances, "ce fut là le commencement des choses" (18). This was the time for pure intellects and was followed by the three ages of the gods, the Cyclops and man. The first age, that of the gods, was a cosmogonic reign which included the Titans, or giants. Each of their gods was in turn dethroned by the next ruler. (19) Then followed the age of the Cyclops, during which time man was still half barbarian, as the Thracians were when Orpheus came to civilise them. The age of man was created when man became detached from this primitive state, when he emerged from the "tout panthéistique" (20), a Spinozian mystic concept. The first age can also be called that of theogony, the second, that of cosmogony, and the third, that of humanity.

"La succession des muses théogoniques et des muses cosmogoniques exprime une succession de faits antérieurs au défrichement primitif. Les muses de l'humanité expriment une troisième période qui se partage elle-même en trois autres périodes, celles qu'ont signalées Varron et Vico." (21)

Ballanche accepts this as the intuitive hierarchy of the past ages. The three groups of muses constitute three choirs which succeed and repeat each other. Their song is eternally harmonious and sometimes man snatches a few faint sounds thereof that have come down through the ages.

The first age was characterised by the reign of Uranus, the second by Saturn and the third by Jupiter. The third age was subdivided into three: an age of divine kings, who were the bridge between the gods and man; an age of human kings (22) during which the patricians were rulers; and finally, the age of plebeian man, which would be announced by Bacchus.

Plebeianism was the highest state to which man could aspire, because it represented humanity in all its evolution.

"Je parviendrai enfin à faire comprendre le plébeianisme qui est l'humanité évolutive, l'humanité se faisant elle-même, sous la forme et la condition de l'expiation". (23)

The plebeian age was also marked by heroes, like Ulysses, who had reached a superior level of civilisation, because he had killed a cyclops. (24) The age of the cyclops was also subdivisible into three distinct periods. There was a mythological period, that of Hesiod, a heroic period, that of Homer, and a historic period, that of Strabo, almost two centuries after the Trojan war. Finally, there was a cyclopic period as described by Virgil, Callimachus and Theocritus, but Ballanche warns that these should be read with reserve, because they were mere imitations. (25) Virgil (70-19 B.C.) took up Homer's story of Ulysses and the cyclops in the Aeneid. Callimachus (c.305-c.240 B.C.) wrote of the love story between the cyclops and the nereid in a poem called "Galatea", among his minor epic and elegiac poems. Theocritus (310-250 B.C.) depicted the love affair between the cyclops Polyphemus and the sea-nymph, in two poems, the Idyll VI and the Idyll XI. Theocritus followed Euripides in sketching a cyclops human in his sentiments, unlike the Homeric version, but in addition he also portrays the cyclops and centaurs symbolically as uncouth representatives of a wild nature, while the heroes, for example Odysseus and Heracles, represent man and the world in which he finds himself. These cyclops would be placed in the mythological and heroic eras according to Ballanche's division, for they are not yet part of historic time, but interact with gods and heroes. He admits that there is much confusion regarding the various ages, because of the disagreement there has often been between the epic and history. He is convinced though, that the cyclops are the first fathers of the human race, a platonic theory. He tries to brush over the confusion regarding definite dermarkations by saying that all these

ages correspond to each other and are analogous.

"J'indiquerai trois âges de Titans, trois âges de Cyclopes, trois âges d'Hommes; et ces différents âges, tous correspondants les uns aux autres, tous analogues entre eux." (26)



(ii) The social nature of history

An age comes to an end when there is social rebirth. Ballanche's preoccupation with the social nature of history falls into the nineteenth century pattern of historiography. Already in the eighteenth century, there was a renewal in history writing, inspired by the progress in the natural sciences. Historiography formulated general laws governing the development of human societies. The Enlightenment thinkers' most valuable achievement was the capacity to study particular societies as coherent units, and the formulation of a theory that the various aspects of each society's life were closely interrelated. A social element was thus introduced in the study of history. In the nineteenth century historiography, there was a general enquiry into the possibility of establishing a law for progress and decline in history. The concern with establishing a law, or what we now call a structure, stems from the rationalists who wanted to explain phenomena rationally. Various authors and philosophers wanted to illustrate their theory of social progress and decline by applying it to a particular age, a particular society. The chief features of the new historiography were (i) the sense of unity given to all of human history, (ii) an interest in continents outside Europe, (iii) bold generalisations about particular periods or societies, and (iv) a preference for topics concerning the progress of human civilisation.

The nineteenth century would come to be regarded as the century of history, of writers like Chateaubriand and figures like Napoleon, all of whom would partake of the renewed interest in historiography. It is a time of Romanticism as well as an age that witnessed the birth of a new science, sociology. In the first part of the century in France, narrative history and the factual representation of events, with some local colour added, dominated, with such writers as Prosper de Barante, Fustel de Coulanges and Augustin Thierry. This was to be followed by a pronounced emphasis on social

and economic philosophy.

Ballanche's approach to history writing is a blend of diverse influences. In certain respects he is a child of the eighteenth century, as illustrated by his adherence to Vico's theory of history, but he has a close association with the pre-Romantics of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, when the majority of his literary output was completed. When Ballanche died in 1847, his oeuvre was practically forgotten, apart from literary discussion thereof at L'Abbaye aux Bois, where his dear companion, Madame Récamier, gathered with her friends.\* Ballanche was then considered mainly an author and a philosopher, least of all a historian. The appearance of his Oeuvres Complètes in 1830 created a certain stir in literary and philosophical circles, but did not extend influence to any other sphere, nor did it provide a lasting topic of conversation. After more than one and a half centuries, it is clear that Ballanche's thought incorporated many of the philosophical theories of his day, reworked into an original creation of his own. Philosophy, history, theosophy, cosmogony, mysticism, sociology and mythology are all an integral part of his writings. His objectives were impressive, because he wanted to give significance to the conflicts of his own age, to contribute to social and political reform, and to anchor these thoughts in a Christian philosophy. These were nineteenth century preoccupations, although Ballanche treated them differently to many of his contemporaries. When he bases his sociological theory on history in an attempt to give an account and explanation of change, he moves in the eighteenth century milieu. Other thoughts of his heralded a new era, that of the pre-Romantics and the Romantics, even the Symbolists. When comparing his oeuvre in method, style and content to that of his contemporary historians, Ballanche stands out as an

\*For an account of Ballanche's social milieu and the literary salon of which he was a member, see Herriot, Édouard: Madame Récamier et ses amis; Payot, Paris, 1931.

individual, because he reunites so many divergent thoughts and theories of his day, standing at the crossroads of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Montesquieu (1689-1755) accustomed his contemporaries to ponder the complex factors that shaped each society. His acute sense of historical realities, which nevertheless did not make him a historian, was illustrated by the history of political theory he completed in 1748, De l'Esprit des lois. Popular periods that were treated in a philosophico-historical manner were for example the millenium of French history from the Carolingians to Louis XIV, as in Voltaire's Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations (1745-53).

Edward Gibbon (1737-94) took another favourite topic, the Roman Empire, and explained its rise and fall, in The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776-88).

Montesquieu inspired Gibbon to insist that history was related to and explained by the social institutions in which it is contained. By unraveling the causes of the decline of the Roman Empire, Gibbon was determined to show that the Europe of his own day had attained a far superior degree of development and was not prone to the fate of the ancient world, but unfortunately for him, the French Revolution disproved his theory. The concept of continuous progress had been publicly formulated by the middle of the eighteenth century by Turgot in France and Adam Smith in Scotland. Turgot (1727-81) said in Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses (1766) that humanity perfected itself through the collaboration of the particular and the general. He divided the stages of social rebirth into eras: during the first stage, the human mind conceived of the world around it as moved by superhuman beings, Comte's theological stage, and Ballanche's mythological historiography. During the second stage, philosophers regarded the fables about gods to be absurd and used abstractions like "essences" and "faculties", Comte's metaphysical stage, also incorporated by Ballanche. Much later, men observed the real world and formulated scientific laws founded on mathematics, Comte's

positive stage, to which Ballanche adhered in his faith in the progress of science.

Adam Smith (1723-90) gave progress and social rebirth a mercantilist aspect, based on the economic variables of land, labour and capital. His analysis of the future was, however, static, for he did not foresee any changes other than economic. Ballanche took the principle of social change a step further than economists like Smith and rationalistic philosophers like Montesquieu, by foreseeing a fascinating future, intellectually and morally dynamic, in addition to a palingenetic past. He is also concerned with the progress and decline of a society, but works on a larger scale, not applying his theory to a specific age, even though he mentions that the present age - early nineteenth century - was a palingenetic one. Ballanche's main concern is with time cycles, clearly an influence of Vico, who displayed a subtle sense of the complex influences by which one phase of society gives rise to another. The reconstruction of the transitions during the early Roman history interests Vico, who is ahead of his contemporaries in his thinking. Ballanche, two centuries later, shows that he is already lagging behind his own contemporaries in still following Vico. Ballanche's concern for history as a vague past consisting of cycles that change and not as a period that should be investigated, was influenced by Vico and Boehme, with whose work Ballanche became familiar through the illuminists like Saint-Martin. In Ballanche's day, the new topic of discussion was social structures and not cycles.

Ballanche's viewpoint is that the study of history and society will demarkate the end of various ages, with one society born from the other in a continuous cycle. Like the individual undergoes palingenesis, so too society. He selects the age of Evander to illustrate a time of crisis in society, a time of ending and renewal, analogous to Ballanche's own era. He compared his own role to that of the poet Thamyris:

to illuminate the king about his fate, to illuminate the reader about the coming of a new social order. To this end Thamyris alias Ballanche recounts the tale of Orpheus, who had also heralded a new social state, a new age of man. Ballanche cites the fall of Troy as similarly marking the end of an age. When Aeneas left to found a new empire in Latium, new destinies and a new cycle was to be created. The ruins of one city led to the founding of another. (27)

Ballanche displays signs that he was familiar with the works of Boehme, Montesquieu, Voltaire and Gibbon, but he is definitely not as advanced in his theory of cultural changes as Niebuhr (1776-1831). The nineteenth century becomes actively involved in clarifying historical detail, which is why Ballanche belongs to the eighteenth century tradition of historiography, which was concerned with a cultural history based on the development of science, rational views and laws, rather than concrete social detail, like the following generation would be. In the nineteenth century idiom, Ballanche is not considered a historian in the same manner as for example Niebuhr, who was also influenced by Vico. The German historian started a new era of historical studies by his method of source criticism, in the History of Rome (1811-32). This work had momentous influence on the general conception of history. Niebuhr's method of constructive skepticism is the root of scientific criticism, of an analysis of the strata in a source, for example the employ of poetical or mythical sources. In pointing out how a historian should discard worthless information, Niebuhr lay bare the material from which historical facts could be reconstructed. The nineteenth century would come to be regarded as the century of history, of writers like Chateaubriand and figures like Napoleon, all of which would partake of the renewed interest in historiography.

Ballanche did not write in the same vein as the French historians of the early nineteenth century. A comparison with

the historic chronicles of a Prosper de Barante makes this difference evident. Barante (1782-1866) wrote down the history of the house of Valois (1364 - 1477), a massive work of twelve volumes, in which he describes the national characteristics, the religion, the legislation, the science and the art of a people. He tells a tale in which the author features strongly, displaying his own erudition. Another nineteenth century historian with whom a worthwhile comparison can be made, is Fustel de Coulanges (1830-89). He founded a historic science, based on principles like scholarship, objectivity and a critical mind, undertaking large enquiries, with much scientific rigour. His method became the yardstick for contemporary historians, most of whom were influenced by positivism. Fustel de Coulanges' style is sober with no recourse to the picturesque. In La Cité Antique (1864), his masterpiece, he explains how the civic life of ancient Greece and Rome was based on religious rites which included many gods. Religion was the constituent principle of the ancient family, the existence of which was ensured through the forbidding of celibacy. The family features strongly in the work, like it does in Ballanche's oeuvre and in many of the sociological writings of the age. Ballanche, however, offers a different approach to this theme: he merely draws the outlines of a theory of social existence and emphasises the link between each successive social age.

Ballanche was influenced by the positivist doctrine of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) in his approach to society and man's role in it, but not in his method of dealing with history. Comte's positivism stemmed from the empiricist attitude towards progress, upheld by Condorcet (1743-94), and propagated by the "Idéologues". Condorcet's theory of progress maintains that the human race continually progresses to ultimate perfection. The human mind can assign no fixed limits to its own advancement in knowledge and virtue. In his Sketch for a historical picture of the progress of the human mind (1795), Condorcet speaks of nine ages of human history,

dating from the pastoral state to an era of liberty, equality and fraternity. The destruction of the inequality between nations and classes and the improvement of individuals, intellectually, morally and physically, took place because of the jettisoning of social and moral prejudices that had impeded progress. The evolutionary sequence Condorcet distinguishes is first, an anthropomorphic and theological age, second, a metaphysical age, third, a mechanistic-materialistic age, and fourth, a mathematical scientific age. He associates each age with a corresponding degree of happiness. Condorcet's is an optimistic example of conjectural history which influenced Ballanche's attitudinal and Comte's theoretical positivism. Comte was convinced that the development of science and the Industrial Revolution combined to form a new culture. He applied the methods of natural science to sociology in his Paris lectures called "Cours de philosophie positive" in the 1830s. Ballanche, however, is still rooted in a thinking pattern anterior to the scientific sociology of Comte, although he does recognise the power of science in shaping the new society or culture. Anthropomorphic/theological and mythopoetic attitudes were better suited to Ballanche's theory of cultural change.

The social or human aspect of cultural changes features strongly in Ballanche's oeuvre. Successive ages are inexorably linked because the people experience a feeling of perpetuity, which is engendered by social institutions, such as legal marriage, the creation of families, the erection of tombs. These are all humanising activities which lend stability to mankind's life, and perpetuates his existence. (28) Identity is given to the human race through the ownership of property and the institution of language. Because he has social traditions to which he adheres, a definite continuity to man's existence is ensured, rendering "le genre humain un tout continu et homogène; enfin solidarité et immortalité." (29) Man will be taught that all in nature is recurrent, that there is cyclical continuity in nature, once he has started cultivating the land and harvests

result from his labours. This ancient Egyptian notion dates from man's observation of the regularity of natural phenomena, like the changing of the seasons. Ballanche's veneration of nature is reminiscent of the nature cults of Dionysos and Demeter. These ceremonial acts, festivals and rituals are a symbol of nature's bountifulness that supplies individual man with his physical needs and social man with his spiritual wants. Harvests will be the emblem of the future, because they are an ongoing activity. (30) Nature labour symbolises social organisation, because, objectively, man's basic needs for food and shelter can also be satisfied by roots and caves. Possession of the land and family life are two supreme examples of palingenetic traditions.

"La faculté de posséder la terre, celle d'assurer la famille par le mariage, celle de confier sa dépouille mortelle à la terre identique avec l'homme par la propriété, ne sont-elles pas la même faculté éminente et incommunicable dont la couche nuptiale du patricien est l'insigne auguste?" (31)

Ballanche's interpretation of the thesis by Rousseau (1712-78) that man's natural state was the ideal one in Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes (1755), gives it a wholly new aspect. While primitive man, Rousseau's noble savage, had as valid an existence as socially developed man, Ballanche proposes the latter mode of existence to entail inevitable progression and a more desirable state. He suggests that nature should be subjected to labour to the ends of social progress. Unlike Rousseau, who said in pre-Romantic vein in La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761) and in Émile (1762) that man should be able to remain in the elegiac state of unspoilt nature, Ballanche desires development through the culture of the soil, which would engender development of social culture.

Life, marriage, birth and death are all part of life's mysteries. They portray steps in the development of mankind. Death is nothing but an initiation, just like life. The hymen symbolises palingenesis (32), because birth and death go hand



in hand.

"Ainsi les chants de l'hymen devinrent à l'instant même des chants de deuil. Le lit nuptial de la vierge fut un tombeau." (33)

The hymen as a symbol of marriage and fertility has a Greek origin. Originally the Hymenaeus was the refrain of a Greek marriage song and later the name was given to the beautiful youth who rescued a group of women from a band of pirates. As a reward, he received the woman he loved in marriage. Their happy married life was invoked in marriage songs. This Attic legend inspired Ballanche to regard marriage/the hymen as a symbol of fertility ever after. Marriage is an initiation and its ceremonies can be likened to cosmogonic traditions, "enfin le mariage identique avec la possession du sol." (34)

Society cannot recreate itself unless it forms a domestic link. When families are instituted, the whole of mankind could one day become one single and great family.(35) Ballanche foreshadows Hegel who said that the development of human relations, especially in the family, had an ontological dimension, in that it not only indicated historical development, but also showed the internal progression from a lower to a higher form of being. Hegel said that the highest form of a social organism was a people, for it embodied the spirit/intellect as well as ethical life. The family was a step in the development towards that kind of initiation, Ballanche believed.

Certain characters also ensure perpetuity of human history, because they belong to the ancient and the new worlds. Such a personage is Talaon, who used to be a Titan, but with the disappearance of his cosmogonic name, he became associated with a new sphere of life. Everything of the old order had vanished, even his name, which would have been revelatory about his ancestors. (36) Talaon's daughter, Eurydice, was another character who stood at the crossroads of two worlds. She would ensure succession of history, because, together with Orpheus, she would instruct mankind, who was at first

primitive and uncivilised. Man was created thus, so that he could be perfectible. (37) To Ballanche, the successive progress of man has to do with becoming refined or civilised, because initially man started his cycle in a state akin to that of animals. This was the case before there were any laws and before man cultivated the land. Ballanche linked the development of civilisation to stages in economic growth, beginning with a primitive communistic stage, followed by the beginnings of property and settled agriculture, and the exchange economy and specialisation of industry, associated with (economic) freedom. This economic approach to cultural change, reminiscent of the Scottish principles of social science in the eighteenth century, demonstrates that Ballanche's world is still essentially agrarian, but that he is already aware of the cultural changes implicit in the expanding world. Ballanche's originality in his day stems from his blend of progress with moral initiation. A minor strand of extremely optimistic philosophy in England propagated the same notion of progress not only in knowledge, wealth or social organisation alone, but also in the improvement of human nature and character. William Paley (1743-1805) whose Natural Theology (1802) influenced Darwin and Richard Price (1723-91) whose rationalistic Review of the principal questions and difficulties in morals (1758) foreshadowed Kant's ethics, believed that God intended social amelioration to be constantly increasing. It is likely that Ballanche arrived at the same conclusion independantly, showing the cultural correllation and development of thought to be similar on both sides of the Channel, yet not subject to direct mutual interchange.

Ballanche said that in a cyclical movement upwards, man would have to be initiated with a feeling of beauty and shame, which would be effected by the lovely Eurydice, prophetess of chaste and religious love. (38) The correlation between beauty and shame symbolises external and internal initiation respectively to Ballanche. Man should be illuminated à propos

the world around him as well as the moral world. His cultural initiation would take place in the domain of society and also inside himself. Progress, however, goes hand in hand with pain, cruelty and sadness.

"La douleur est la loi progressive de l'univers." (39)  
The suffering increases as man's intelligence increases, because then he becomes aware of the problems concerning his existence.

"A mesure que l'homme s'élève dans la sphère de l'intelligence, il augmente en lui les facultés de la douleur." (40)

This idea of progress is not a nineteenth century nor an Enlightenment notion. The philosophical thought in these ages linked progress to a feeling of well-being and happiness. Ballanche conceives of pain as an emotion and not as a sensory experience, pain linked to emotional suffering, because man was aware that he was not yet fully initiated. Man's sadness is inevitable, because he belongs to a higher level of civilisation than other living beings. His pain is an incentive to moral progress, says Ballanche, adopting the viewpoint of Helvetius (1715-71) that pleasure and pain produce desirable social results, because sensations which the mind received were the source of all intellectual activity. Ballanche is not a hedonist like Helvetius, who explained his theory of pleasure and pain in De l'esprit (1758). To Helvetius, such progress was experienced on an intellectual level, for he attacked morality based on religion, to Ballanche, on an intellectual as well as a religious/moral level. The notion of painful progress is found in the writings of the Baron d'Holbach, who likewise attributed it to the ignorance of members of society, only then awakening to the implications of their destiny. In the Système de la nature (1770) he said that social collaboration would slowly increase happiness.

For Ballanche, the acquisition of knowledge or initiation is necessarily painful and engenders suffering. The moment any notion of the future stops living in us, our soul dies. We

need to have a prophetic view of the future or else "notre âme s'éteint lorsqu'elle est dans les ténèbres de la vision pour les choses futures." (41) When he does glimpse the future, man would fall into terrible despair if he does not have the hope of immortality to console him. (42) Man should know that there is always continuation and regeneration. In the Bible the patriarchal age, one that is characterised by long lists of successive sons of the fathers, is described with family life as its basis. This is a reflection of the Cyclopic age, also perpetuated through dynasties of family tradition.

That is why one cycle ends when an initiated comes to initiate someone new, and the latter will have to kill the former to ensure the succession of life. The pattern of perfectibility is always destruction, followed by rebirth. (43) Therefore the catalyst of all life can be seen as death. Each new cycle is identified with a violent transition. The sybil of the ancient world is killed by the force of a new century, represented by Orpheus and Eurydice, the daughter of the bronze age man, Talaon. The sybil tells Orpheus that

"La destruction est le grand dieu de ce monde, où la vie n'est produite que par la mort." (44)

Mankind was eternally subject to death and even though he constructed monuments to last into the furthest reaches of the future, they would be destroyed with great ease. (45) The instrument of rebirth is death, says Ballanche through Thamyris' statement:

"La sibylle à qui vous devez le jour, ô Evandre, sait qu'un empire cyclique s'établit par le meurtre de celui qui représente l'empire précédent." (46)

The same sybil of the ancient world says:

"Je prédisais le siècle nouveau qui me tue." (47)

A sybil is a cycle of civilisation, suggests Ballanche. (48) A sybil has the function of being historic, he says, whereas a siren is linked to the age of heroism and a muse to the age

of mythology. Ballanche's conception of a sibyl is akin to that of the Christian theologians of the first centuries of the Church, when it was imbued with mysticism. These Church fathers adopted the sibyls as prophetesses from Greek legend and literature and gave them prophetic authority comparable to that of the Old Testament. The Judeo-Christian sibylline oracles consisted of nine books and contained prophecies linked to the Apollonian tradition. From the late fourth century, the word sibyl became a title and multiple sibyls each had an individual name and a historic character. Ballanche employs the sibylline tradition because it allows him to unite mythology and Christianity in his theory of historic changes.

The past is constituted of a chain of murders, each introducing a new cycle. The preoccupation with death is clearly a sign of the times. Ballanche had recently seen the ending of an age through the execution of its ruler, Louis XIV. He transcribes the actual event into a general historic law, that of the eradication of an old culture through the death of the father. In order to reign, Uranus killed his father, Aemon, Saturn killed his father, Uranus, Jupiter mutilated his father, Saturn, and Saturn in his turn became relegated to the sombre realms of Tartary, in order to keep the succession of the Titans enchained. Violence becomes a need, a prerequisite for rebirth, because Ballanche has been exposed to that kind of social upheaval. Objectively seen, it is not a necessity that a cycle should be fulfilled through violence, it could as well come to an end peacefully when its aims are fulfilled. However, Ballanche considers aggressive acts, such as murders or sacrifices, as more appropriate to such a transition. This is an illuminist and also a Biblical theme, furthermore, it hangs close with Ballanche's personal experience.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) later displayed the same preoccupation with the death of the father as the instrument for starting a new social régime, in Civilization and its

discontents (1930). He starts from the basis that man has an aggressive nature. Already in primitive society, men had decided that through forming a group, consisting of several men united, they would have more power than a single man. Man's innate aggression allowed him to revolt against the father of primitive times, who was a terrifying character. In order to share in the power that he had kept restricted to himself, the band of brothers murdered the father in an act of violence. Freud's viewpoint is that there would be far more aggression and violence if man's sense of guilt did not refrain him from killing. Guilt induced uneasiness in society or culture, but murder led to shared power. Ballanche's viewpoint is thus very modern, for he understands the effect that discontent with rulers could have on the common man, on society. He accepts that violence, as the prerequisite element to stamp out anxiety, is for the good of all, but does not consider its moral implications, as Freud would do. This lack of insight on Ballanche's part is not truly Christian, because then he would be concerned more with morality and guilt. To Ballanche, the greatest possible group had to share in the cultural advances and advantages of society, and the only means for the minority to be replaced by the majority, was instinctively through violence.

Each change of reign being violent, Ballanche is convinced of man's aggressive nature, hence the necessity of revolution. There is a divine dynasty that presides over each revolution, ensuring that the plebeian aspect of the society or civilisation assumed power. When Jupiter assumed the throne, he eventually had to hand it over to the civil world. (49) With the arrival of the time for the appearance of the human dynasty, came the necessity for several revolutions among empires within this dynasty. After these had been decided, there would take place moral revolutions, still effected in the age of man. At this time, Jupiter would have been dethroned by Bacchus, who would be the plebeian chief and king of a new human race, the one which was then dominated

by the patricians, successors to the Titans, whose reign had to come to an end.

"Nous le savons à présent, les initiateurs doivent se retirer lorsque les initiés sont en possession de la science. La race puissante des Titans a donc dû finir."

(50)

Together with the Titans of the third age, man's first benefactors and initiators, Orpheus had come to instruct the new race.

The present exists only in terms of the ruins of the past, and the past, "qui fut le présent, n'existe que sur les ruines d'un passé antérieur." (51) The same cyclical design has always existed throughout the ages, far into the past. Gibbon, interested in the decay of civilisations, wrote extensively about the ruins of Rome. He saw the whole of humanity under a dark aspect and did not show much interest in human progress like Ballanche did. From Gibbon Ballanche nevertheless inherited the notion of the past as ruins, a concept that came to be associated with the Romantics, as well as attributing the process of the rise and fall of nations to an interplay between East and West. The theory of destruction allows Ballanche to relish in celebrating pain, ruins and death, because he can incorporate them in his philosophy of life by giving them a prerequisite dialectic nature. Later in the century, the Romantics would transform the preoccupation with death into a decadent and painful morbidity.

To Ballanche, man's perpetuity is a fact, proved by the regenerative power of death. The social ceremonies man takes part in, such as marriage, are a symbol and a commemoration of the cosmic happening. The process of pregnancy and birth symbolises cosmic incubation:

"La conception, la gestation, l'enfantement, ne seraient-ils point de vivants emblèmes?" (52)

The globe, created from chaos by the ordonnant word, is gifted with universal life, which will always bring forth

individual life. (53) Individuality is born from universality, and in turn, becomes universal when it produces races and families. Man's essence/intellect presses him to abandon universal life, in order to live his own life. Animals are different in that they are signs and witness of universal life. The moment of liberation from the universal life was a cosmogonic event, a palingenetic moment. This occurrence was analogous to the division of the sexes. To primitive man, the division of the sexes was the same as the division of classes to a more evolved man. First there was thus universal life, then the division of male and female, then the distinction of classes, all of which pointed at man's palingenetic development. This means that the dogma of immortality is born simultaneously with the notion of humanity, perpetuated by its culture, at first literally tilling the soil, then figuratively manifesting cultural achievements.

The other feature of society, following family tradition, is leadership. Ballanche describes a system of natural leadership, which would be decided without a duel. The strongest would become the victor, because he had in himself the feeling of his power:

"celui qui avait en lui le sentiment de sa force se présentait pour chef." (54)

Natural leadership is a means of divine judgement (55) which reinforces the belief that the individual has in himself. Ballanche holds power to be in the imagination, because he speaks of "sentiment", feeling for power. He adheres to an ideology, which has no facts to back it up, that leadership could be founded on the charisma of the individual. He is aware that politics, since Machiavelli, are made of imaginary processes, and do not need physical acts of violence to assert its might. However, because the tradition of killing the father has been part of man's legacy, regeneration more often than not assumes a violent aspect. The German sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920), says in The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (1930) that leadership is



based on inheritance - circumscribed by custom - and bureaucracy - the regularised administration which pervades modern mass society - but also on the extraordinary personality of an individual. Ballanche's ideological notion of power and rationalised progress or development is a very modern one and approximates Weber's stance on ideal leadership types, because he realises that leadership struggles cause constant distortions in social communication and that survival is more often than not the privilege of the one with the most imagination.

The evolution of different ages is speeded up through war and battles among the multitudes. Ballanche says that civilisation itself is indifferent to the outcome of these kinds of battle. Civilisation would always side with the conqueror, because the passing of one age to another is marked by man's becoming more civilised. Ballanche engages Thamyris in telling the story of the barbarian king Oeagrius, whose people fought a primitive battle with rocks and tree trunks, until Orpheus brought them harmony by playing on his lyre. A sibyl spoke to them thus:

"Ecoutez la Voluspa des contrées du Nord, la sibylle du siècle nouveau. Je sais toutes choses. Les sibylles du siècles qui viennent de finir, je les ai connues."

(56)

She says that the Titans had come to their end because of their battles against the elements, against cosmological forces, against chaos. Man was the driving force of the new age and he would battle against himself. When man appeared, so did a god, called Orpheus, who brought healing and harmony by playing on his lyre. The soft light that surrounded him, symbolised the dawn of humanity. For Ballanche, an analogous era of renewed progress started in his own day and age.

(iii) Awakening of a new age

Following his historiographical revelations, Ballanche maintains that he heralds an era of renewed progress, just like Orpheus maintains that he brings the power of progress, not happiness, because he teaches culture of the land, which socialises man.

"ce n'est pas le bonheur que j'apporte aux hommes, c'est la puissance du progrès." (57)

This is a nineteenth century vision of progress, as propagated by the bourgeois economists. During the eighteenth century the keyword was happiness, with the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill which proposed an action to be right if it tended to promote the happiness of everyone. Bentham's An Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation (1789) explained that the object of law is to achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Mill determined methods of scientific investigation into social well-being in A System of logic (1843) and Principles of political economy (1848). In the nineteenth century, happiness was seen as the predominance of pleasure over pain, not in purely sensual terms, but à propos mankind's general well-being. Progress was not a hedonistic concept, but implied power and individual freedom, said Saint-Simon, Fourier, Comte and Marx, amongst others. The idea was closely linked to evolution and change which would culminate in a utopia.

In 1827 Ballanche's Prolégomènes de la Palingénésie sociale appeared as well as Michelet's Principe de la philosophie de l'histoire and Quinet's translation of Herder's Idées sur la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité. Michelet's passion for the philosophy of history inspired him to translate the Scienza Nuova of Vico, who had a definite influence on Ballanche's conception of history. Michelet (1798-1874) relived the past through his empathy and imagination of the heart. In his Préface (1869), he echoes Ballanche in saying that history is the resurrection of integral life. He goes on

to prove that life and history are a constant interaction of economic, political, social and moral facts. Michelet says that everything is solidary with everything, that everything is mixed with everything. Events that seem disparate at first are in fact the soul of an age. Michelet also said that history was the intelligence of life, much like Ballanche, who holds intelligence to be the supreme expression of existence now and forever.

Michelet holds the same view as Ballanche that existence is dynamic, an interminable struggle of man versus nature, spirit versus matter, liberty versus fatality. He says that each man is his own Prometheus, that each man creates history through labouring at his own being. Like Ballanche, Michelet compares the fate of man to that of a nation, stating that France created France, or that what counts for the individual, counts for a people. The indication that Michelet is a spokesman of a later age than Ballanche's, is his conviction that only progress of the new age was relatively good. The past, such as the barbaric Middle Ages, is seen as an enemy. Ballanche is of the more Romantic opinion that the past is simply an inferior state of development, but that it had an inherent goodness in it, but he is not as extremist as Rousseau, who held it to be the only perfect state. Ballanche's history writing is imbued with a moral intention. Hugo would likewise translate cosmic justice into the miraculous intervention of Providence. Ballanche's tale of Prometheus exemplifies his stance that man is a moral being, that he acquires a knowledge of good and evil, and that he is subjected to a system of purification after his fall from grace.

His belief in the dawn of happiness and well-being by means of the progress of science echoes Saint-Simon (1760-1825) whose charitable doctrine is based on religion but not necessarily on the Church. Ballanche's is a social Romanticism, not as scientifically social as that of Comte and the positivists, but nevertheless moral in intent,

through his preoccupation with the role of society in man's existence.

In contrast with the eighteenth century secular and materialist orientation, Ballanche has a religious approach to man's journey in history, founded on tradition. His is a spiritual doctrine of self-realisation. Whenever he speaks of perfectibility, he signifies the attainment of evangelic charity, equality and liberty, extending it from a religious to a social sphere. The original age when man lived in blissful innocence was a moral age par excellence, which moved into an intellectual age with the advent of science. Ballanche advocates a return to the moral age, with the advantages of the intellectual age incorporated in it. This coincides with the final doctrinal development of Saint-Simon which stated that the scientists had to share their position as social leaders of an age with the moralist leaders of the new Christianity. In L'Industrie ou discussions politiques, morales et philosophiques, dans l'intérêt de tous les hommes livrés à des travaux utiles et indépendants (1817), he sees man as at once rational and religious (with a third category, the activists or social administrators), constituting mind and feeling (and will), all at the same time. Saint-Simon influenced Ballanche in the emphasis he put on man's religious and intellectual nature. Modern humanity was seen as a composite of complex, divergent, but harmonious and essential parts.

This Romantic approach to society suited Ballanche's theory and he freely incorporated these beginnings of scientific sociology into his writings. However, he never allowed it to become a fully-fledged exposition like in the case of Comte. He merely let the atmosphere of Romantic socialism pervade even such theoretical works as his Essai sur les Institutions Sociales. Ballanche reunited in his work both divergent attitudes towards society: the Romanticism of the Orphic cult and the materialism of positivism. He can therefore be considered a bridge between an age-old tradition which

blossomed again in the nineteenth century and a thoroughly modern development of science. Ballanche is not at all materialistic, unlike Vico, who considers the world to be merely matter. Ballanche uses one aspect of Vico's work, the cyclical patterning of history, which, in the Scienza Nuova, was an attempt to make history scientifically explicable, much like Comte's attempt to make society a positively explicable phenomenon. He turned Vico's ideal eternal history, which was a universal archetype, into an instrument for understanding the traditional history of all nations, but not into a dogma. While Vico does not grasp the relativity of all cultures, Ballanche, who has been exposed to discoveries of other, older cultures, understands that civilisations other than our own conform to the same grand cultural design. He uses the Orphic cult to further a notion which is positivist in its realistic approach to the cultural hegemony of our past.

Unlike either Vico or Comte, Ballanche nevertheless establishes a link between the two philosophers, because of the selected theoretical similarities his work displays with both. Ballanche's is a pre-positivist attitude: he is following a different route, an Orphic one, to establish whether sociology is scientific or not. The nineteenth century displays two strands of thought regarding sociology - Ballanche's, which is Orphism, and Comte's, which is science. Like Comte, Ballanche preached a religion of humanity, in which he placed all his faith, because it existed palingenetically. Comte worked his theory out in detail and Ballanche did not. The late twentieth century thinking again reinforces Ballanche's viewpoint that sociology should not be too scientific, but that it should be studied as a humanity instead. Ballanche's vision of progress has more in common with that of the nineteenth century sociologists than that of the bourgeois economists of the previous century. He wants to bring man power to control his own destiny, including his daily life. Orpheus is the metaphor of progress, like Prometheus, who taught man to use his intelligence. What

makes Ballanche's theory original, is that he does not propose a synthetic or exhaustive system of progress, like Marx (1818-83) would do when he held revolution and reform to be the only means to progress. In the Communist Manifesto (1848), Marx limited all of history to a class struggle between the possessors and the dispossessed, whereas Ballanche denied that culture was mechanical, a one-on-one concept. Ballanche never becomes a committed ideologist, because he believes that fluidity is present in any concept. Mythopoetic symbols he holds to be the most valid means to describe cultural progress, because they enhance man's history and his future in fluidity.

It is evident that even though the passing of an age has to do with violence, according to Ballanche, it will be superceded by a superior harmony, a superior civilisation or culture. Orpheus taught king Oeagrius about social doctrine and laws, and that man should live with the future in mind, so that the charms of hope would be granted to him. Whenever man was able to think about posterity, he would cease to be miserable. Happiness is therefore linked to a conception of the future, of eternity.

The first age, says Ballanche, came into existence when man was constituted of God's thought. Wanting to visit the empire given to him, in order to penetrate the forest with daylight, his existence was subject to resistance from all the genies of the air, the earth, the ocean and the elements. When man realised that he had to worship the gods through his own labour and sweat, and that certain animals would likewise serve man, the art of sowing and reaping would take on a new significance. It would symbolise the future centuries, immortal soul, and God, the Creator of man. Orpheus' chant awakened the intelligence of king Oeagrius, and he became aware of an unlimited horizon. This marked his own imminent departure from the age he lived in. Ballanche thought in the idiom of the theorists of political economy, who held trade to be the key to progress, when he said that two

prerequisites of the new civilisation were commerce and war. The implication of trade was communication among nations, which in turn engenders progress. The economist Turgot had said, already in 1766, in the Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses, that the human race was marching on the road to perfection, by means of commerce. Ballanche repeats what the theorists of political economy were saying in his day and age, namely that trade and communications were the features of the new era. The main issue to Ballanche nevertheless remains the progress of humanity, even though founded on knowledge and science. Like Condorcet, Ballanche envisaged progress as moral above all, because knowledge added to man's virtue, ignorance to his lack of spiritual understanding. The English freethinkers Erasmus Darwin and William Godwin translated the French idea of human perfectibility in terms of evolution, or palingenesis as Ballanche would have it, and not utopia, as the nineteenth century sociologists would have it. Commerce could become possible, not only among various parts of one country, but also between Asia and Europe, because of the culture of the soil. Orpheus prophesied a time when no two parts of the world would be strangers to each other, when the different seas would communicate among each other.

The dialectical opposite of peace, war or revolution, was just as necessary, seeing that it served the purpose of progress. It awakened man to his external world and jolted him into action.

"Ces combats affreux, où je vous ai surpris, étaient-ils autre chose qu'une première secousse donnée à nos facultés jusqu'alors ignorées de vous-mêmes?" (58)

An exchange of faculties and feelings resulted from war. It engendered a justice of submission to laws and rules, documented by peace treaties and alliances.

"La guerre elle-même, qui semble être le résultat de la barbarie d'où vous sortez, est quelquefois un effet terrible de la civilisation, et sert à ses progrès." (59)

Ballanche is anti-Voltaire in that the latter described history as a useless succession of cruelties, crimes and misfortunes, in his Lettres anglaises or Lettres philosophiques (1734). To Ballanche, peace and war would provide stability, because patriotism would be kindled. The social state would, however, never be one of rest. It would mostly engender storms and great suffering on the road to perfection.

Ballanche makes the point that nowhere on earth has there ever been a lack of history or tradition. History and intellect go hand in hand, he says. The moment man's intelligence is awakened, so too is his memory. Ballanche's belief in the power of the intellect is echoed by Godwin, who subjected the human mind to a natural law of progress or perfectibility. However, Godwin's thought developed to embrace intellect and technological progress as the prerequisites for doing away with all authority, in An Enquiry concerning political justice, and its influence on general virtue and happiness (1793). In Outlines of a philosophy of the history of man (1800), Herder (1744-1803) also expressed optimistically the notion that the mind would be developed further through social and human evolution. So did Lessing (1729-81), saying that the human mind had to pass through phases of ignorance, doubt and terror before it could become capable of receiving the truth about its existence. Lessing foresaw, like Ballanche, an age of man in which he would approach perfection and the highest grade of illumination, but expressed his theory in polemics against orthodox theologians and in dramatic criticism of his own age in the Laokoon.

Man's history therefore dates back to the time when he first became a creation of God's mind, and ever since, there has been a continued tradition. The only interruptions are those parts forgotten by man or those parts which his mind has not yet learnt to understand, for which Ballanche uses mythology as clarification. King Oeagrius of Thrace states that the



knowledge he gained through Orpheus' initiation, had always been latent in him. He had apparently always had the sense of a dynasty residing in him, but it was only awakened when the royal sceptre was laid in his hands, making him the founder of a new race. Progress was not to be gained automatically, without any effort on man's part. Palingenesis was a natural law, but man had to play a role in fighting for his perfectibility. He could very easily fall back into his former primitive state.

To illustrate the importance of developing the intellect, Ballanche uses the fable of the Thracians fighting their first battle. The barbarians, with their disdain for life, soon got the overhand. The reason was that although the Thracians had come to enjoy their more civilised lifestyle, they still had no identity of their own for which they could fight. The Titans had not left any marks apart from their footprints. They had no tradition on which to build, no sense of the foregoing. The king was the only one with a name, and therefore an identity. Consequently his people easily reverted to barbarian warfare, at which they were not as apt as before. As a last resort, the king asked Thamyris to play on Orpheus' lyre. Soon the elements were calmed, sunshine broke through to announce the triumph of civilisation. Civilisation immediately put an end to unnecessary carnage. A few prisoners were taken, so that they could be taught human dignity. They adopted the new customs and remained behind to practice them, while others returned to tell their fellows about the civilised customs of a new age.

Ballanche expounds a theory of language as the instrument to develop the intellect. In this context, he relates it to one of the first acts that resulted from the battle: the giving of names to everyone:

"Ce n'est qu'avec un nom que l'homme peut espérer de vivre dans la mémoire des hommes; ce n'est que par un nom qu'il peut avoir un père et des enfants...Il faut des noms aux chants des poètes." (60)

Perpetuity was ensured through the songs of poets, but in order for them to sing about someone, they required names. The names, few as they were, that existed before, had been those imposed by the Titans during their cosmogonic reign. Only then came human names, given to people, places and the spatial spheres. Despite name-giving, people remained in a state of semi-barbarism, because they still did not possess the feeling of eternity. There were no heroes yet among the Thracians, no-one for the poets to glorify. They were still a race of "hostiques", a term which Ballanche uses to imply exoterism, a religion linked to time and place, and reinforced by superstition.

Opposed to this, substance, is the "ops" (plural "opès"), or essence, which is the earth, man identical with the earth, man in his absolute sense, man with an esoteric religion and a belief in himself. This man is the Latin "vir", with all its connotations of virtue, honour, virginity and virility, situated in an earlier age. (61) The religion that Ballanche calls "opique" is associated with civilisation, because general traditions could be accommodated in an esoteric religion. The acceptance of several divergent traditions, as mere filiations of one archetypal tradition, marked a degree of development of man's intellect. Familiarity with the myths of Saturn and Rhée is a prerequisite for becoming civilised, as it enhances the comprehension of mankind's earliest history.

The Thracians only went as far back in history as the tale of the god Mars, the cruel Arès, arbiter of battles. While there was no longer cruel carnage in battle, because the Thracians had been subjected by the harmonious sounds of the lyre, man's banquets would still be marred by visions of war. (62) The change in lifestyle in the Thracians marked the commencement of the age of the patricians, a civil world ruled by jealous patricians who would impose severe labours on the plebeians. The illustrious Hercules is the great plebeian of that age and his destiny would be to conquer the

sky, which would be man's reward for having conquered the land by cultivation. (63) Since the Renaissance, Hercules has been depicted as a civilising agent in cultural tradition.\* He takes part in almost every human activity and his works, his travels; his loves, his crises and his death make him the most humane of gods. Ever since the fifteenth century, Hercules was regarded as the type of perfect man, who succeeds in memorable exploits through his own physical and intellectual prowess. He is the favourite god of the humanists, and although his persona undergoes several transformations, traditionally Hercules is always associated with good works. In the sixteenth century, the Hercules who had peopled and civilised Gaul was conceived of not as a Greek hero, but as a much older, Egyptian or Libyan Hercules.

In the Egyptian guise Hercules symbolises rising nationalism and the grandeur of a people, and proves that the French origins are not only far-off and certain, but also glorious. Several regions in France regarded Hercules to be their founding father, such as Burgundy, Savoy and Navarre, and also cities like Paris, Poitiers and Nîmes. The gallic Hercules was a Renaissance invention, which certainly did not form a part of the ancient myth. However, for the most part, the French Hercules was a civilisator. To Rabelais, he was a model prince, to Ronsard, the institutor of sowing and reaping, the benefactor of the human race, as Ballanche conceived of him. Ballanche also deems fit to refer to Hercules as the great plebeian, because he features in so many myths. Like Orpheus, Hercules is merely a character of many guises, to be used as an illustration of a cultural tradition. The myth of Hercules is an instrument to express Ballanche's thoughts on history, politics and society.

\* For a study of Hercules in the cultural tradition, see Jung, Marc-René: Hercule dans la littérature française du XVIe siècle (de l'Hercule courtois à l'Hercule baroque); Librairie Droz, Genève, 1956.

To Ballanche, the land will always remain man's domain par excellence. This is the scene where his life's task will take place, to be rewarded in another life with existence in another sphere. In the mean time, "l'homme est condamné à faire la terre où il veut habiter, à faire l'air et le climat." (64) The earthly period is an initiation, described as a "voie lente et cyclique." (65) This slow, cyclical path evolves progressively so that the emancipation matures through graduated tutelage. Man will always ascend gradually towards more complete initiation. However slow it may take place, progression is the law of human existence.

"L'avancement des destinées humaines est aux prix d'initiations lentes, successives, mesurées." (66)

Contrary to what Rousseau says in Du Contrat social (1762), Ballanche is convinced that palingenetic melioration will take place successfully in the social state only:

"C'est dans l'état social, en effet, que l'homme peut se perfectionner; mais à quoi lui sert le perfectionnement?" (67)

Ballanche asks the question, what good is perfection, and replies that it will enable man to ensure his future. Man's fate on earth is always unhappy, because the more he becomes instructed, the more he feels insecure and unwell. (68) His torment is caused by his anxiety to extend his future to celestial spheres, by thinking about it, while he should be acting. The only certain fact is man's neverending quest to discover a destiny unknown to him. His destiny, like the origin of his past tradition, is a mystery, but conforms to a great plan, a natural law.

"Nous savons seulement que nul obstacle ne peut arrêter son développement dans les siècles." (69)

The absolute conviction rules that whatever man's journey, it is progressively towards the right goal.

One discerns much of Hegel, who said in the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (1832) that human history was a process of advancement to self-knowledge, which would realize

human freedom, or the self-realisation of the spirit, through religion. Hegel stated that the first step was a natural life of savagery, to be followed by a state of law and order, founded through force and violence. Yet eventually Hegel's thought was static, for he saw progress as a political process and the ultimate state of freedom as the Prussian monarchy. Ballanche's attitude is less conservative and far ahead of his time in linking social freedom to an interplay of explanatory systems, as opposed to all-explanatory systems like that of Comte or Marx. Because society is a living entity to Ballanche, it is best described through symbols of eternity, through metaphysics.

Incomprehension is symbolised by a darkness that surrounds man (70). The motif of dark and light is central to Ballanche's description of man's ignorance and intelligence regarding cosmic matters. Those parts of history unbeknown to man are hidden in darkness; they are there, but the veil covering them, has to be lifted. Initiation is therefore the same as being illuminated and gaining insight into the truth. Knowledge filters through clouds of obscurity, provided man subjects himself to expiation, the only means of gaining progressive revelation. Before man can take any steps on the path of initiation, he needs atonement, which comes in the shape of calamities, "ni gratuites ni fortuites." (71) There is a reason for every suffering that man is subjected to. Therefore suffering should be accepted as an integral part of life. Suffering is involuntary and serves a noble purpose. Man should never feel that in his suffering through the ages, God has forsaken him. The human race would always be ensured of protection (72), because its destiny is to be continuous. Man himself is but a fleeting moment, but his being or his soul is immortal (73). The soul is portrayed as a traveller, who journeys through the celestial spheres, in continuous cycles. This acts as a "série d'épreuves par lesquelles il faut qu'elle passe avant de pouvoir être introduite dans son état définitif." (74) Cyclical history is symbolised or simplified as a voyage, a journey through dark and unknown

landscapes. At certain intervals along man's travels, there are "lights" to indicate that he is marching progressively towards his unknown destiny, which he knows to be nearer to God. The universe is a myth full of hieroglyphics, specially created by Providence "pour charmer ses sens, pour étonner ses esprits, pour agrandir son imagination, pour développer son intelligence." (75). Imagination and intelligence are equally effective.

Secrets regarding time and space constitute the universe and are expressed through myth. They are concerned with man's rituals or traditional customs, his calendar and his planispheres.

"Voilà pourquoi encore nos cycles sociaux sont en même temps des cycles astronomiques." (76)

Social cycles appear to be concurrent with astronomical cycles. From this statement one can deduct that Ballanche believes in a planetary influence on social movements. The movement of the planets concurs with what happens to man in his social environment. Social institutions like the division of sex and class, marriage and laws are explicable through cosmogonic dogma. These apparent laws seem to have been created as laws of nature, objectively and outside society, outside man's influence, by a general tradition of how things should be. The doctrine has been passed on throughout the ages, thus posing man a problem in the deciphering thereof:

"Tous les hommes ont un problème à résoudre; et c'est le problème des races, des peuples, de l'espèce." (77)

Man cannot explain how these institutions came about. He is certain of their existence, but he has only a subjective certainty, intuitively gained. He merely knows that they have to be there, that they are a prerequisite for the success of the social order. The less civilised peoples, the barbarians, whose history goes further back, do not possess the answer either. The secret has never been revealed to man "Parcequ'il est des mystères déposés dans les traditions, à l'insu de ceux qui en sont dépositaires." (78) Everybody needs this

revelation, because to Ballanche this is what our existence is all about. Even ignorant barbarians like King Oeagrius and intelligent barbarians like Talaon need illumination because "c'est pour tous que l'essence humaine...a besoin d'être relevée tout entière." (79) The reason behind humanity is the key to our existence, consequently we yearn to decipher the essence as opposed to the material form of life. Not even the initiated priests of Egypt have insight into tradition or in the philosophic idiom of the nineteenth century, laws, because whenever some aspect of history becomes clear to them, there is always another veil to hide something else.

Ballanche says that although the fall of a race is usually associated with an external catastrophe, such as happened to Samothrace, (80) sometimes an interior catastrophe may take place as well. An inner catastrophe entails the loss of memory, when man's intelligence seems to have regressed a step:

"L'intelligence aussi a ses ruines, ruines si tristes et si imposantes." (81)

The Romantic image of ruins as something which has lost its wholeness, its health, is recurrent in Ballanche's text, here indicating a loss of sanity, and implying that when man cannot take a step forward, he is downgraded by losing his mind, or his memory.

However little man knows about the workings of the past and of traditions, divine Providence wants him to have faith in society, in the social state as an initiation to hasten the progress of the beloved race. (82) Society is a witness of the primitive unity that we all share, because society engenders a common feeling in man. This is the prerequisite for progress. Ballanche finds the counterpart for his theory in the social Catholicism that was a feature of French theological thought at the time. At the head of a movement that attempted to combine political liberalism with Roman Catholicism after the French Revolution, was the priest, philosopher and political writer Félicité de Lamennais (1782-1854). Lamennais held the revival of Catholicism to be

the key to social regeneration and advocated democratic principles such as the separation of the church and the state. His Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion (1817) made him famous for showing a readiness to combine Catholicism and political liberalism in France. Lamennais exerted a powerful spell over Adèle Hugo, wife of Victor, and her close friend, Sainte-Beuve, who conveyed the priest's religious guidance to the literary circle of Chateaubriand and Madame Récamier, Ballanche's trusted companion.

Linked to the same strand of thought, were Montalembert and Lacordaire. Montalembert (1810-70) stood in the forefront of the Catholic resistance to the state, insisting that the Church should encourage religious and civil liberties. In his Des Intérêts Catholiques au XIXe siècle (1852), Montalembert spoke of a "free Church in a free state", holding Catholicism to be the answer to social progress. Lacordaire (1802-61) was another leading ecclesiastic in the Catholic revival after 1789 who wanted to improve the fate of the masses as opposed to the privileged. In L'Avenir, the liberal Catholic magazine he founded with Lamennais in 1830, Lacordaire propagated the restoration of the religious orders that had been destroyed during the Revolution. Ballanche also places his faith in Catholicism as the instrument to create social well-being, but not in an organised Church. Religion is essentially social to Ballanche and therefore he does not deny its usefulness in promoting the general welfare of mankind, but rather than accredit it with the validity of organised social developmental programmes, he believes the main function of religion to be the assurance it gives man of an uninterrupted past, an uninterrupted cultural legacy, by means of tradition. Tradition, to Ballanche, is the essential component of social well-being, and it is fostered through religion. However, in addition to a concern for man's social destiny, religion in Ballanche's vocabulary also entails a certain mysticism, which was very attractive to the young spiritualist writers of his day, such as Ernest Falconnet, Turreil, August Bouzenot, Leclère d'Aubigny, Alfred



Desesserts and Alphonse Esquiros, as pointed out by Brian  
Judén in Traditions Orphiques et Tendances mystiques dans le  
Romantisme français 1800-1855.\*

Religion to Ballanche is linked to perfectibility. Ballanche asks why there should be this quest for perfection, and why this necessity should so much resemble an expiation. He asks whether man was originally created imperfect, or whether he had fallen from his original state because of his own mistakes. The answer to this mystery is not meant to be known by man. His spirit/mind was incapable of comprehending the reason behind tests and expiation. Ballanche could merely try and explain man's fate through the use of the name and the fable, both symbolic of a religious and not a historic past.

\* Éditions Klincksieck, Paris, 1971, p 373.

NOTES: CHAPTER 1

(i) A biological concept of time

(1)"Le temps a dû être l'image de l'éternité." Première addition, 20.

(2)Première addition, 18.

(3)Encyclopaedia Britannica, William Benton, Chicago, 1959, vol. 17, 148.

(4)"L'homme, ainsi que les animaux et les plantes, a dû être complet dès l'origine." I.S., 225.

(5)"Certains philosophes matérialistes, qui n'ont pas reculé devant la rigueur des conséquences, ont donné pour ancêtre à l'homme une huître." I.S., 240.

(6)Première addition, 17.

(7)Première addition, 21.

(8)ibid.

(9)Première addition, 22-3.

(10)"cette immense et merveilleuse horloge de l'univers, qui sonne incessamment les heures palingénésiques de tant de globes roulants au sein de l'espace infini." Première addition, 19.

(11)Orphée VIII, 120.

(12)"Le temps, en quelque sorte continu et immobile, rendu appréciable par la succession de nos idées." Orphée IX, 220.

(13)"Le cours des astres, les cycles astronomiques imaginés par l'homme, sont la mesure du temps, et ne sont pas le temps." ibid.

(14)ibid.

(15)ibid.

(16)Première addition, 25.

(17)Orphée IX, 220.

(18)Orphée III, 232.

(19)"Saturne, dieu des Titans, fût détrôné; Jupiter, dieu des patriciens, sera détrôné à son tour." Orphée IX, 210.

(20)Première addition, 23.

(21)Orphée I, 70.

(22)"Protée fut le dernier roi de race divine qui ait régné sur nous; car jusqu'à lui nos dynasties royales furent des

dynasties divines." Orphée VIII, 134.

(23)P.S., 152.

(24)"Vous m'avez parlé du grand Ulysse, héros plébéen, qui en ce moment subit des épreuves au-dessus de ses facultés primitives. Il n'y résistera point, puisqu'il n'a pu conserver dans ses mains l'outre de l'éternité, puisque lui-même s'est déclaré client d'un cyclope." Orphée IX, 235-6.

(25)"poésie d'imitation à étudier avec réserve." Orphée III, 184.

(26)P.S., 152.

(ii) The social nature of history

(27)"Enée allait, avec les débris de Troie, fonder un empire dans le Latium." Orphée I, 93.

(28)"Le passage de l'état brute à l'état humain, de l'état accidentel à l'état stable, de l'état passager à l'état perpétuel." Orphée II, 127.

(29)ibid.

(30)"Moissons dorées, n'êtes-vous pas l'emblème de la vie à venir?" Orphée III, 232.

(31)Orphée IX, 185.

(32)"l'austère palingénésie de l'hymen" Orphée III, 221.

(33)Orphée III, 225.

(34)Orphée I, 75.

(35)"La société ne peut se créer qu'en formant le lien domestique; la propriété, sorte d'identification avec la terre par culture, devient sacrée par les tombeaux; et c'est ainsi que le genre humain tout entier peut parvenir un jour à n'offrir qu'une seule et grande famille." Orphée II, 175.

(36)"Son nom qu'illustrèrent sans doute ses premières années, et que sans doute aussi avaient illustré ses aïeux, son nom même a péri." Orphée II, 132.

(37)"Les dieux, vénérable Evandre, qui voulaient la perpétuité de notre race, destinée à se perfectionner elle-même, donnèrent d'abord à l'homme des sens grossiers, suffisants pour accomplir ce dessein de la Providence

divine." Orphée II, 137.

(38)"Eurydice en effet sera pour la Pélasgie barbare la prophétesse intacte de l'amour chaste et religieux." *ibid.*

(39)Orphée II, 142.

(40)Orphée II, 228.

(41)Orphée IV, 204.

(42)"Dès qu'il s'élève à l'appréciation du temps, dès que son esprit conçoit l'avenir, il entrerait dans le désespoir, si l'immortalité ne lui était pas révélée en même temps." Orphée III, 228-9.

(43)"Dans ce monde, tel que l'a fait la déchéance de l'être intelligent, tout est destruction et renaissance." *ibid.*

(44)Orphée III, 201.

(45)"Les pères de la race humaine actuelle ont vu détruire les monuments qu'ils avaient élevés pour égaler la durée des siècles." Orphée III, 200-201.

(46)Orphée I, 103.

(47)Orphée III, 200.

(48)"Il aurait à étudier l'histoire, sous ce rapport, et à nous dire si, en considérant la longue vie attribuée aux diverses sybilles, il ne serait pas permis de présumer que le nom de chacune fut celui d'un cycle de civilisation." P.S., 147.

(49)"Et les emblèmes de ces révolutions sont des emblèmes de violence. Le règne de Jupiter c'est le règne précurseur du monde civil." Orphée IX, 226.

(50)Orphée II, 130.

(51)*ibid.*

(52)Orphée VIII, 174.

(53)"et cette vie universelle, sans cesser d'être la grande vie de tout ce qui a vie, va formant toujours, par un développement continu, des vies individuelles." Orphée VIII, 175.

(54)Orphée IV, 237.

(55)"Dans le moyen âge ce fut un des formes du jugement de Dieu." *ibid.*

(56)Orphée IV, 246.

(iii) Awakening of a new age

(57)Orphée IV, 251.

(58)Orphée IV, 259.

(59)Orphée IV, 260.

(60)Orphée IV, 276-7.

(61)"L'ops est donc pour moi le vir d'un âge antérieur, l'homme qui a en soi la raison de lui-même." Orphée I, 73.

(62)"leurs banquets seront encore de funestes images de la guerre. Mais leurs batailles ne seront plus un aveugle carnage, sans renommée, d'hommes sans noms, proie obscure de vils animaux." Orphée IV, 280.

(63)"Eurysthée est le grand patricien du monde civil qui commence; Hercule en est le grand plébéien, et ce plébéien illustre a fini par conquérir le ciel." Orphée IV, 285.

(64)Orphée IV, 283.

(65)Orphée V, 302.

(66)Orphée V, 326.

(67)Orphée IX, 201.

(68)"Il n'a conquis l'avenir que pour conquérir de nouveaux tourments." Orphée IX, 201-2.

(69)Orphée IX, 232.

(70)"Je sais que la vérité est dans le coeur de l'homme, mais souvent elle y est environnée de ténèbres, et nul n'a plus besoin de moi de flambeau de sages pour dissiper ces ténèbres." Orphée VI, 60.

(71)Orphée VII, 60.

(72)"soyons toujours certains que jamais les dieux n'ont cessé, qu'ils ne cesseront jamais de veiller sur la race humaine." Orphée VII, 64.

(73)"l'homme, être éphémère qui contient un être immortel, voyageur illustre et inconnu, marchant dans une route obscure où quelques clartés guident ses pas pour le conduire à la région de la lumière." Orphée VII, 65.

(74)Orphée VI, 23.

(75)Orphée VII, 66.

(76)ibid.

(77)Orphée VII, 69.

(78)ibid.

(79)Orphée VII, 70.

(80)"une grande catastrophe qui a bouleversé jusqu'aux vestiges d'un monde plus ancien." Orphée VII, 71.

(81)Orphée VII, 70.

(82)"L'état social est une initiation de plus que la providence divine a crue nécessaire pour hâter le progrès de cette race qu'elle aime." Orphée VII, 72.

## CHAPTER 2: MYTHOLOGY

### (i) What is myth to Ballanche?

Ballanche holds myth to be an extremely important instrument in the description of history. What he attempts, is to depict a religious, rather than a historic antiquity. Because his aim is not to render a factually correct version of past events, but rather an interpretation of the past, the myth suits his ends well. The myth offers a poetic view of the particular part of history that fascinates Ballanche, namely the creation of the universe. As a personal version of the past event, it is subject to a transformation by the interpreter thereof. In this context the myth of creation becomes a new creation in itself, but on another level: that of the historian who uses it in his own particular way to explain the past. Invention is engendered in mythology, because of the active role the author plays in it. Especially where primitive history is concerned, the mythopoet can use his intuition in his rendition of past events.

"lorsqu'arrive le temps de l'histoire, et que l'on veut raconter le fait primitif, il faut en quelque sorte l'inventer."(1)

Mythology, according to Ballanche, renders history in an abbreviated form, gives it an algebraic aspect (2). Many facts or symbols are grouped together to record an event, but only one central idea is remembered. One symbolic conclusion remains embedded in the mind, one mythic rendition of the past, as an explanation of history. There is no notion of cyclical evolution which is not the function of mythology. Mythology creates a story which acts as a veil or a symbol (3) to a complex past that is not apparent to the layman. The vehicle to create a past without breaks is the myth, as interpreted by Ballanche. He describes history as though it would "faire jaillir la lumière du sein de si épaisses ténèbres." (4) From the dense darkness of the past would shine forth the light of history, as enabled by mythical

historiography. Ballanche believes in the existence of a continuous past, but says that man cannot reconstruct it completely, because certain parts of it have been forgotten or were not revealed to him. When Ballanche thus uses the myth to account for history, he is inventing sections thereof himself, in an attempt to elucidate the common man. By inventing, he construes an ideal past or an ideal age. He speaks of "la région idéale où le mythe et l'histoire sont choses identiques,"<sup>(5)</sup> convinced that there is not any difference between the validity of history and the myth.

This belief is reinforced by the desire to reconstruct an ideal eternal history, as advocated by Vico, whose influence can be clearly discerned here. Ballanche's method of operation is to invent a myth to suit his historic ends. He states emphatically that his account is not scientific, because a mythological approach is far more appropriate to his own age, an age of palingenesis when the intuitive sentiment of primitive things was prevalent. Nevertheless, the mythological approach was equally as valid as one based on science, and is a truthful evocation of antiquity. The common man was to benefit more from a rendition of history that employs a myth rather than a philosophical theory. While mythology allows for interpretation by creative intellects, and can be regarded as a veiling theory, it is simultaneously a simplification in that it does not pose certain unanswerable questions. When told as a story, the plebeian audience would comprehend the secrets of existence far more readily, than when exposed as a theory or a doctrine. As the myth serves the purpose of a tale to the end of Platonic speculation, it makes use of symbols, both to simplify and enhance the significance thereof. Ballanche's employ of the myth as a symbolic rendition of history stands in sharp contrast with the philosophico-naturalistic theories of the preceding century, when "enlightened" thinkers tried to explain the past in rationalistic terms. Ballanche uses the myth both as an argument, namely to prove that palingenesis is a law of nature, and as a description or



narrative of historic processes. Because he believes that myths outline a particular area of human culture, he uses mythological themes to compose a cultural history, which includes legendary and traditional history. The employ of the myth entails creative and imaginative thinking, which fits perfectly into Ballanche's scheme of intuitive history writing. Mythology, to Ballanche, implies internal scrutiny, not only by and of the individual, but also by and of a society, for myth is created in society. Ballanche esteems this function to be the most valuable in determining the cultural changes that make up man's history, but he also acknowledges the validity of science, which determines the external laws of nature.

(ii) Myth and ancient history

When speaking of ancient history in the sense that Ballanche uses it, we mean that part of man's past which just follows the Creation. Ballanche upholds that there is a certain pattern to cosmic history, which is the same in all the ancient traditions. All myths of the ancient world speak of the same initial age of man: the Golden Age. In Ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Indian, Zoroastrian, Hebrew and Greek philosophy, there is a common factor, namely a mythopoetic approach to cosmology, or the creation of the universe. The Genesis account is held to be as cosmogonic as the Indian Ramayana, because both recount primitive history.

"Quant aux traditions sur lesquelles le christianisme a voulu être enté, celles-là même ont besoin d'être éclairées par un flambeau allumé au même foyer de l'Orient. Les premiers Pères de l'Eglise le savaient bien." (6)

Ballanche quotes Themistius, the fourth century Greek philosopher who rewrote Aristotle in a more modern language and style, as saying that the great Master of the universe seemed to be pleased with a diversity of cults. Different nations have different beliefs, and even among one nation, there may be different beliefs. (7)

Mythology explains what happened in the vast primitive period of time. It differs from the doctrine of history in that it does not concern itself with determined epochs, but is applicable to an indefinite period that preceded all other ages. Ballanche's hypothesis is that there existed a primitive mythological unity, which is why all earlier civilisations recounted the same myths. Myths measure advances in history, demarkating palingenetic ages, in that they are concerned with the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. Ballanche is not concerned with what happens in the cycle, his main interest lies in the transition from one age to the next. According to him, mythographers and poets are unanimous on the past of mankind.

(8) An author like Fulgentius, the mythographer popular in the Middle Ages, would thus satisfy Ballanche's prerequisite for a historiographer. The Golden Age was subject to division and rupture that scattered men all over the world to become part of different civilisations with distinct degrees of civilisation. Various nations were therefore at various initiatory points, and all attained to the primal state of harmony. All men contained a segment of the original unity, the one God, but it remained a secret to them what exactly that unity was.

He says that the centuries before the present humanity came into existence can be summarised in one formula: the dogma of the fall from grace and man's subsequent rehabilitation. (9) This underlines the belief that man should be hopeful of complete rehabilitation. This takes place through a process of rebirth in a cyclical pattern. Man's perfectibility is successive, and is subject to certain tests. (10) Due to Ballanche's theory of palingenesis or rebirth, which is linked to constant progress and development of the soul or intellect, this world should not be viewed under a negative aspect. It is a preparation for better things and life does not come to an end with death. Ballanche's is a happy and joyful approach to man's eventual attainment of total initiation or enlightenment about the ways of the world.

Man's earliest history was partly obscured, and to certain initiated thinkers who attempted to explain it to mankind in general, there was no chronology to illuminate the past. The gradual series of facts pertaining to the First Ages and which were nowhere written down as history, would have to be rendered through mythology, which was an expression of traditions, beliefs and dogmas. The myth is a symbol of anterior history, says Ballanche. He follows Kant, who referred to the myth as the objective of anterior history in his Critique of Pure Reason. The primitive age is seen as a great mountain that obscures the horizon, or as the limit of man's visionary field. Ballanche is determined that the

mountain could be approached and that man's vision could be extended. The anterior state of the human race is described in a kind of marvellous history of which we do not know the details, because they are presented in "de formes insaisissables, qui a une chronologie, mais une chronologie idéale, qui se résume ici par un dogme, là par un mythe, selon les traditions et les croyances." (11)

The most appropriate example was the civil myth of Roman society, which Ballanche would use in his Orphée, and which was analogous to all past traditions. Through induction, all peoples, at diverse ages, had a correspondence among them, which consists of a chronology, with no fixed measures.(12) Assimilation, analogy and relativity mark Ballanche's approach to the past, and therefore he uses the myth with great facility. The very beginning or point of departure for the human race is essentially mythical or dogmatic, because it is so obscured. He tries to get closer to it through a process of assimilation, and to this end, he uses palingenesis and a doctrine of succession. However divergent the different segments or ages of the past have been, they all constitute one harmonious whole.(13) The instrument to describe in layman's terms this one entity is the myth, because it engenders assimilation. By simplifying various events in history, they are likened and brought in closer proximity with each other, in order to make them more generally understood. Thus we have the Genesis account, which simplifies the creation story and recounts an initial division of the world. Ballanche accepts the simplistic Biblical version that there happened a "revolution" which changed the face of the earth and made it inhabitable. This caused the first scattering of peoples, who were initially all part of one great family or tradition. The dissemination over the earth was spontaneous and took place instinctively, "à mesure que les eaux se retiraient, à mesure que les volcans cessaient de brûler."(14) People acted like the birds in their migration and like the bees in the construction of social institutions, like building primitive cities, which

are hieroglyphic or mythic analogies to the hive.

The liberal amalgamation of Eastern philosophy and Christian dogma is justified by Ballanche's viewpoint that all is one. Doctrines that had up to then been regarded as widely divergent, could be accommodated in one archetype. Like Ballanche marries the Oriental doctrine of continual rebirth until full initiation is reached with the Catholic belief that the soul does not die with the body, he also marries several creation tales, saying that they are all analogous. The reason why they seem divergent, is because each tradition clothes its thoughts in different words and myths. This is possible because man has a creative intellect and because his view of the past is only partial. He therefore constructs his own version of history.

"les traditions primitives se modifient et s'altèrent en s'assimilant à l'intelligence humaine; c'est ainsi que chaque homme finit par donner de la couleur de sa pensée à la pensée divine." (15)

Mythology is made up of personal interpretation, making successive alterations to tradition as it is submitted throughout the ages. This adaptation of history or tradition takes place according to the genius of each one of the diversity of human families. Ballanche's theory is that people construct their past according to the complexity of their intellectual development. Creation myths or accounts are all part of the same tradition (16). He stresses the role of the individual in the formation of social traditions, as opposed to the sociological trends of his day, which tended to deny the individual his creative and determinational power, and ascribed tradition to society as a whole.

These accounts are a prerequisite to the development of the human mind. Whenever there is diversity or variety, man's intellect is the unifying factor, because he assembles all the fragments of myths. His limited vision will allow him to

see only one side of a matter, whereas another man or race might see the other side only. When the two collaborate, they have a more complete understanding than before, even though they are still not concerned with a more complicated question. The social factor and mutual communication serve a fruitful purpose in enlightening man. Likewise, men of different ages may understand different parts of their past. By passing down their knowledge, they ensure that mankind's general ignorance is gradually lessened.

"L'esprit humain ne voit pas toutes les faces; celles qu'il voit, il les voit à mesure qu'elles sont éclairées par le temps." (17)

Because man has the gift of memory, he can collate all the bits and pieces of information at his disposition, and recount it to others. (18) Throughout time man acquires more and more insight or knowledge, so that eventually, in his perfected state, he would have a complete understanding of the cosmos and his role in it. Ballanche is thinking along the same lines as Condorcet, who believed that the future age, the tenth age in man's development, would be one of human perfection. In the mean time, he has to be content with seeing the pieces of the jigsaw fall slowly into place. This continuity of tradition through recounting the myth, is ensured by the family, or the social state.

"C'est ainsi que nous avons, par nos pères, vécu dans les temps antérieurs à nous; c'est ainsi que, par nos enfants, nous vivrons dans les temps qui doivent suivre." (19)

Sometimes man has a vague memory of what happened in a previous life, during which he never lost the feeling of having a separate identity. (20) In each life, he follows a predetermined course. Because he cannot remember too much about his history, because "notre intelligence ne peut plus voir que des nuages," (21) man invents mythology. It follows that he accepts the history of the present world as his own individual history.

(iii) Myth and Egypt

Ballanche's mythical exposition of his cyclical theory has its roots in ancient Egyptian history. The characterising feature of the Egyptian attitude towards existence was their strong sense of Becoming, closely linked to their observation of nature, in particular the flooding of the Nile and the movement of heavenly bodies. Ballanche's theory of time was inspired by the Egyptians' relating evolution to astronomical periods, and by their conscious looking into the self. These two features of their culture form the basis of a mysticism that Ballanche reflects in his attitude to symbolism and metaphor: he borrows an intuitive wisdom which is ideal, as opposed to rational, and founded on the value of the symbol and the myth. The result is a vital philosophy of existence and a view of cultural change that is non-cerebral. He was influenced by the reigning Egyptomania at the end of the eighteenth and the start of the nineteenth century. The culture of his age was enriched by the rediscovery of Egypt and Mesopotamia, due to the Napoleonic Wars, the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone by Champollion, and the first promising attempt at decipherment of cuneiform writing by Grotefend in 1802.

The neo-Classical preoccupation of the eighteenth century extended only so far as Greece and Rome and consequently a whole new world was opened up to interest historians, philosophers and linguists of the early nineteenth century. The added historical scope was incorporated into their researches, giving a new dimension to neo-Classicism. When Ballanche thus takes the Egyptian civilisation as illustration for his theory of cultural changes, he is at once acting in the spirit of his times, and modern in his thinking.

Ballanche says that the cycle of history starts in a primeval age, when gods were the supreme rulers. Ancient Egyptian kings derived from these gods and reigned there for a long

period, when Egyptians were born happy and perfect. (22)  
He employs the Egyptian view of an evolving royal principle, which starts with the pharaoh, evolves through Osiris/Isis to Horus and eventually to Christ. Ballanche is thinking in the vein of the mysticism that marks the first three centuries of the Christian Church, which for him found expression in the symbolic and hieroglyphic nature of a culture like the Egyptian. Ballanche's is not a factual approach to history. Because he does not attempt to demarkate time, he does not say how long the gods - become kings - ruled in Egypt. Egypt to him is a metaphor for social history, for it contained all the various social classes, a representative selection of life, like the Greek mythological symbol of the ship "Argo". Gradually Egypt became less and less subjected to cosmogonic powers, while man made the land his own.

"l'homme se l'est assimilée par la culture." (23)

When he started cultivating the ground, man established a progressive law for society.

The descendants of the Egyptians gradually deteriorated into their present fallen state. To Egyptians there was no return to the Golden Age, because of their preoccupation with material life after death, as can be judged from their funeral rites. In Hebrew thought the theory of a Golden Age is reflected in the tale of the Garden of Eden. Before the fall from grace, there was nothing but bliss and innocence. In the prophetic books of the Bible, a return to the Golden Age is often prophesied. The coming kingdom of God is a pivotal belief of the Judeo-Christian religion.

Ballanche says that the cycle of human history will be complete when man attains immortality, but a different kind of immortality than the Egyptians believed in. History is merely an interim in which man is prepared for the return to God or to his perfected state. St Augustine in the City of God also gave this explanation of the purpose and meaning of history, in a systematic and philosophical manner. Ballanche is not as systematic, but states that this cycle of history



will end with the reunification of man's soul (intelligence) with an immortal God, which is the symbol of eternity and ideal existence.

Ballanche esteems all cosmogonies to be analogous, be they Hebrew, Celtic or Brahman Indian, therefore he says that all creation myths can be summarised in a few lines, to be found in the Book of Thoth:

"Un Egyptien lut quelques lignes du livre de Thot; et ces lignes étaient un résumé de ces cosmogonies diverses." (24)

The image of Thoth is an Orphic or hermetic allegory for time. This explanation justifies Ballanche's proposition that by studying the Egyptian history, many of the mysteries of the past would be revealed to us. When Ballanche says that the Egyptian cosmogony is a résumé or summary of all other cosmogonies, he distinctly wants to ensure that the Egyptian should not be regarded as comprising all others. No one cosmogony is completely contained in another, but they all contain the same basic explanation of creation. By talking about a summary, Ballanche signifies version, a version that he regards to be particularly concise, yet comprehensive and open to several levels of interpretation, due to the hieroglyphic nature thereof.

In the Egyptian history, man can attempt to recreate the history of the universe. Egypt was only one age, but because of the hieroglyphic nature of the culture, the Egyptians were preoccupied with the mysteries of existence as shown by celestial symbols. They sounded many of the enigmas of the past, the present and the future. Ballanche says that we have lost many of the meanings concerning our history, with the neglect of Egyptian studies, but that the cycles are moving to get them together again. He had faith in the progressive nature of his own age, a new and dynamic era, to discover the mysteries that were known by the Orientals.

Ballanche's emphasis on Egypt stems from the rediscovery of

that culture during his own time. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the situation and knowledge about Egypt consisted mainly of exaggerated tales by travellers. Egypt had for a long time been the source of all that was mysterious.. One source on Egypt that coloured the eighteenth century conception thereof, was the Divine Legation of Moses (1737-41) by William Warburton (1698-1778), which defended revealed religion and demonstrated the divine authority of the Mosaic writings in the Old Testament. In Book IV appears an Essai sur les hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens in which the symbolic nature of hieroglyphics is emphasised. Ballanche adhered to this notion of hieroglyphics, for it remained to be discovered that hieroglyphic symbols were in fact no more than phonetic signs. With the arrival of the French expedition in 1798, a new era in the study of Egypt was born. Henceforth, Egypt could be properly and scientifically rediscovered. In addition to the invading forces, there was a Commission on the Sciences and Arts consisting of 167 scientists and technicians, including many eminent scholars representing virtually all the sciences of the day, who set sail for Egypt. Lead by Baron Dominique Vivant Denon, they were to play a significant part in the birth of Egyptology, particularly the sixteen cartographers and surveyors among them. Denon's Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte (1802), an account of his travels, was instantly popular, published in several editions and translations in English and German. The drawings which he and other members of the party made, were intended for a definitive work, Description de l'Egypte (1809). (see Appendix II)

Almost immediately collections of Egyptian antiquities started to be made, with Napoleon as one of the first collectors. He had founded an "Institut d'Egypte" upon his arrival in Cairo, and expected its members to investigate any and all matters regarding Egypt. With the British conquest in 1801, one of the stipulations of the peace treaty was that the French savants would be allowed to keep their notes, but were obliged to hand over all antiquities discovered by them.

These are today exhibited in the British Museum, the chief antiquity being the Rosetta Stone, the surface whereof the French had made copies and casts, which many scholars came to study. The Rosetta Stone contained the key to the future of Egyptology, and Champollion, who had been fascinated by hieroglyphics since a young age, became the founding father of Egyptology when he deciphered the names and titles of Roman emperors, made a list of hieroglyphic signs and formulated a system of grammar, before his death in 1832. In his Lettre (1822), Champollion corrected the list of alphabetical hieroglyphic characters that had been drawn up by the Englishman Young. This happened at a time when several travellers, especially the English, started visiting Egypt.

The next great scholarly work on Egypt, after the Description de l'Egypte, came from Germany. The Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien by Richard Lepsius appeared only in 1849-59. As the nineteenth century wore on, Egypt became more accessible to travellers, who regarded it as the place to visit. In Ballanche's time, though, travels to Egypt were more restricted, and he himself never visited the country. However, a keen interest in Egyptology prevailed, and on the bronze medal commemorating the Description, an involved design showed Egyptian gods and goddesses flanked by a scarab and an ankh sign of life. Together with hieroglyphics, these formed the basis of study about Egyptian mysteries, which were predominantly concerned with creation, becoming and return.

Ballanche's palingenetic theory of cultural changes has its roots in the Egyptian notion of eternity and perpetuity. The Egyptians speak of an eternity which is beyond all time, but also before the Creation, implying a fixed beginning. Creation represents the constant transformation of One into Many. Eternity represents cosmic energy which constantly gives life and sustenance to the world, and perpetuity is distinguished by periodic crises, attended to by the temple rituals. From this periodicity and the cyclical aspect of

cosmic life derives a notion of time. When Ballanche thus speaks of time existing a priori, although it is given a definite cyclical character through observation by our senses, he operates in the same idiom as the ancient Egyptians.

In the formation of his cosmogonic philosophy, or palingenesis, Ballanche sought his inspiration in the ancient Orient. (25) Saying that light originally came from the East, he believes that it should be sought there again. Later traditions such as the Greek, which have always been esteemed as an original philosophical force, are only transformations of Oriental thought.

"La Grèce fut à l'Orient ce qu'est le génie critique au génie original." (26)

The view that Greece was not an original culture or creative force stems from the Renaissance opinion regarding Orpheus and the other prisci theologi. These ancient writers were seen as translators of good Hebrew allegories and good Hermetic hieroglyphics into bad Greek fables, resulting in idolatry. Ballanche's notion is not original, but is certainly new in an age that was preceded by a neo-Classical culture revering Greece and Rome exclusively.

The Indian philosophies provide him with a point of departure for the philosophy of palingenesis as renewal and regeneration. Although he regards the Orient as our cosmogonic and intellectual cradle, (27), where Western traditions are born to be transformed according to the relevant location and period in time, he states explicitly that the Indians squandered the ages. The first account of centuries condensed into cosmogonic days was by Moses. (28) Here too one discerns the influence of the Renaissance thinkers like Ficino in Ballanche's viewpoint. These syncretists believed that there was a clear line of tradition that started with Moses in Egypt, where the prisci theologi like Orpheus received their instruction from priests that had either been illuminated by Moses himself or by books that he

had left there. This knowledge was then transported back to Greece, where it underwent transformation.

The Occident has remained far behind the mystic doctrines of the Orient, which teaches us that the past is the mysterious epic of the future, says Ballanche. The myth of the beginning would teach us the myth of the end of the world. A doctrine of beginnings is simultaneously a doctrine of endings: both are described by mythology. (29) Ballanche is here clearly influenced by the hermetic tradition, according to which Hermes-Trismegistus had said that there where everything ends, all begins eternally.

Life is a never-ending struggle to attain initiation. The West is nourished in its quest by the East (30), which has unfortunately fallen into a state of stagnation. The West would be the dominant factor in the new palingenetic age, because it strives towards progress and initiation. The Orient has one secret which it has not yet divulged to the West, and that is the crucial matter as far as Ballanche is concerned. Referring to Vico, who asked the same question, he says:

"Jusqu'à tel point est-il donné à l'homme d'entraîner la nature extérieure dans la sphère de la liberté humaine, d'assujettir cette nature extérieure, de l'ennobler en la domptant, en la subjuguant, en la transformant?... Jusqu'à quel point l'affranchissement des formes pour l'univers et pour l'homme peut-il être l'ouvrage de l'homme même? Jusqu'à quel point pouvons-nous espérer d'arriver à l'ancien magisme, en le sanctifiant? C'est là le dernier mystère que l'Orient cache encore dans son sein." (31)

Ballanche's concern for forms and material phenomena is as significant as his idealist conception of time. It is especially in his theory of language as a factor in social/cultural development, that he concerns himself with the limitations imposed by form on idea. In this instance,

Ballanche is of the opinion that man can subject certain forms of nature to his power, that he can create culturally in as far as one is for example harvesting, in the literal sense of the word culture, or instituting social traditions, using the word culture in a figurative sense. Unfortunately man cannot yet give form to the mysteries of his existence, he cannot yet determine the laws of being. This is the end towards which Western man strives, according to Ballanche. He attempts to ascertain what the laws of our existence are, unlike the main philosophic activity in the nineteenth century which concerns itself with the nature and not the content of these laws. The nineteenth century thinkers assume an objectivist attitude towards laws of nature, saying that these exist and cannot be changed. Ballanche's idealist notion is that these laws can differ or change according to our interpretation thereof. His is not a totally subjective view, though, for he does not say that palingenesis is a system which can be replaced by another system. Ballanche is in part an objectivist, stating palingenesis to be in nature, to exist eternally, a priori, but in part a subjectivist, because even though palingenesis is not a system liable to undergo a posteriori replacement, it can undergo changes in perception. This explains various mythical interpretations of the mysteries of time and existence. The Orient and the Occident, as respective representations of permanence and progression, initiation and the faculty to receive initiation, an enveloped humanity and an enveloping humanity, are both multiple and identical. (32) The link between the two civilisations is Egypt, because it stands on the periphery of both worlds. In Egypt, the Orient and the Occident find one common ground from which to draw cosmogonic knowledge. Egypt is a summary of the universe and contains not only divine but also human institutions. (33) Egypt offers a syncretic view of all present and past civilisations. It is a diluted image of India. Our Western intelligence is far from containing the boundless, infinite character of the Indian culture. (34)

Ballanche uses Egypt as the model of initiation in his

Orphée. Egyptian sages, instructed in the mysteries of Isis, are described as holding the key to many of life's riddles. Egypt is the image of all social initiations. Ballanche chose Isis, symbolic goddess of the earth, as a symbol of Egyptian mysteries, for several reasons. She was the most popular goddess in Egypt, from the reign of King Psamtik I (664-610 B.C.) until the advent of Christianity. In that position she became well-known to the Greeks, when her cult was brought to the Mediterranean shores from Alexandria. The goddess is perceived as being involved with the fate of human beings, in particular in such social roles as mourning rites, curing the sick and giving life to the dead. Isis is complemented by her husband or brother, Osiris, a mirror character of Orpheus. Both Osiris and Orpheus set out to teach agriculture, the laws of harmony and the ways to worship the divine powers. The same fate befell both initiators: their bodies were divided into many parts after their death and scattered over the universe to disseminate initiation. The mystery of social origins to Ballanche seems to rest on the isiac tradition. In the early nineteenth century there was a renewed interest by the illuminists in esoteric influences and how they act on social institutions. The initiatory rites and mysteries of the Egyptian goddess fascinated Ballanche, who almost certainly read about them in Apuleius' Golden Ass. Nerval (1808-55) would take this theme and enlarge upon it in his Sylvie and Voyage en Orient, incorporating mystical rites and initiations into a theory of poetry as a cult of art - a Romantic notion par excellence.

The country and its civilisation embodies tradition, divine and human. As a heterogeneous culture, it is an example of unity in multiplicity. Life in Egypt does not seem to be based on anything. As a result men want to give continuity to death. They want to fix death itself, as an emblem and a measure of immortality. (35) They celebrate the different ages of human existence with funeral rites, like a palingenesis consisting of lives and deaths, born from one another. They place all the emphasis on the act of dying, which is why

death is not frightening to them. Egypt also serves as symbol of man's labours in the soil, an essential element of his civilisation. Egypt, which had been socially organised and humanised extensively by controlling the annual flooding of the Nile, through canals and dikes, was distinctly more civilised than the Titan countries.

Because the Egyptians kept a close watch on nature, the passing of time was clearly discernable to them. To celebrate the passing of time, they erected magnificent monuments in contrast to those who had only just emerged from barbarity. They were an ancient race with many generations of ancestors. Time had accorded the Egyptians an unequalled grandeur:

"Par-tout j'avais rencontré une race humaine touchant aux origines obscures, berceau mystérieux de toutes choses; ici c'était une race humaine déjà séparée des origines obscures par plusieurs grands siècles de traditions." (36)

Dynasties of gods preceded those of the mortals. Egyptian civilisation was based on its civil development, its submission to laws "non point antiques mais éternelles." (37) Ballanche is concerned with eternal laws, which seemed to him to have received their fullest expression in the culture of the Egyptians. Because they had a known past and could speak of generations and dynasties past, not only of mortals but also of gods, they were far superior to any other race that was only just starting to build up a civilisation. Their superiority came from their conception of history, which is an essential element in man's progressive development.

The proof that the Egyptians were a superior race lay in their use of the symbol, says Ballanche. Monuments were emblematic, both inside and outside, which gave them a divine aspect. (38) Ballanche realises the importance of symbolic values for any culture. The symbolic Egyptian language simultaneously revealed and hid its meaning, making it mysterious and literal, profound and superficial.



Hieroglyphics could be interpreted on several levels and therefore they give a fluidity to language, which was lacking in the eighteenth century conception of words and phrases, which were used on a definite, one word for one meaning, basis. Ballanche's interest in hieroglyphics gave him insight into the living nature of language, a view that has become popular in the twentieth century, but which was original in his own day and age.

Like appearances seemed to veil realities in the Egyptian hieroglyphics, natural phenomena also assumed a symbolic nature. Even the Nile with its unknown source seemed to be a rapid and living image of the traditions that disappear in the obscurity of time. Ballanche was especially struck by the living, dynamic characteristics of the Egyptian culture, even though its traditions appeared to focus on death. From this vitality Ballanche drew inspiration for his theory of death as a prerequisite for dialectic regeneration. In Egypt, tradition showed clearly that history is unlimited, because throughout the country there exists a feeling of vagueness and infinity. It resembles a dream in which one constantly makes discoveries. Ballanche calls it the "royaume de l'immobilité" (39) which has a "spectacle imposant des eaux illimitées" (40). This Romantic notion of water, here the Nile, but generally the ocean, holds it to be the primordial element of creation. The basic principle on which all Egyptian cosmology is based, is that of primeval waters, which feature in all their creation myths. The ocean symbolises eternity, because one's vision could extend to the horizon without encountering one obstacle. This is the embodiment of time unlimited. Because of the constant celebrations of funeral ceremonies, Ballanche concludes that Egypt is the perfect example of a civilisation in which all has been said. All life there is born of death, successive death. (41) Death is however not merely an inevitable event in the passing of time, imposed on man as though he were a puppet. It serves a definite purpose, namely to elevate man. It is thus not a fatal event, but rather a law of love,

serving to enhance man's development.

"La mort n'est donc point, comme on le croit, le simple résultat d'une loi nécessaire, la dure loi de la succession des êtres; et cette loi elle-même de la succession des êtres, loi cosmogonique et non fatale, pourrait-elle être autre chose qu'une loi d'amour?"

(42)

Destiny is not to be imposed on intelligent man without pity, destiny serves a purpose. Life consists of tests, comprising both happiness and unhappiness. That is why man has to die in order to reach a higher level of comprehension. (43)

What disturbs Ballanche about Egypt, is that man there is always mourning for the preceding age, therefore he successively mourns his own changing and mobile existence, all through the various ages of man. (44) Tests and purifications are a necessary element of the social state, which is not one of rest, but one of storm and great suffering. (45) Happiness is not the aim of humanity. Each age has a kind of clothing that is buried in a tomb until the day when the body itself, man's last piece of clothing, is deposited. Then the body is cared for painstakingly, so as to give reality to death. Afterwards, man's ashes are honoured, his remains are embalmed, and much more, by giving him a tomb, "on lui construit une demeure stable à laquelle on s'efforce d'assurer une durée éternelle." (46) To the Egyptian it is a means of fixing his own existence in eternity when he establishes death as the emblem and measure thereof. Death brings initiation to mankind, because it is not an ending, but a beginning. Another life is always foreseen after this one, with man's body remaining behind and his soul/intelligence perpetuating his existence in a more civilised life. (47)

Ballanche is convinced that the detachable soul would always search to be initiated further. He uses the example of the nymph Erigone, who left her mortal body to join Eurydice in waiting for the divine poet Orpheus. (48) Erigone's soul

disappeared in a ray of light, for her to join the choirs of Elysium and play the divine lyre without breaking its chords. Death brings both civilisation and initiation to mankind.

Man attained to the sky, because it was unlimited. Egypt was a representation of the sky (49) which plays such a significant part in Ballanche's symbolism. The sky contained cult signs, it revealed the time for religious and civil festivals and ceremonies. Man wanted to fix the image of destructible terrestrial objects in the sky. By doing so, the earth, man's temporary abode, could in a certain sense become part of the sky's eternal duration. Man's chants were preoccupied with the celestial, they were fascinated by the unlimited number of stars in the sky which formed animal constellations. These were hieroglyphs that spoke simultaneously of astronomic and social cycles. The sky is the symbol of our mysterious origin, where "le point de départ reste toujours voilé." (50) But from the sky, we get an indication that our destiny is palingenetic, that it is progressive and conditional to expiation.

(iv) Mythology and Christianity

The preoccupation that Ballanche has with mythology, should not be regarded as an exclusively pagan attitude. Through mythology, he expresses his conception of Christianity, or the theory of creation ab intrinsico. Yet Ballanche incorporates a certain pagan theology into his doctrine, and approximates Christian and pagan beliefs through the common denominator of the myth. While he repeatedly states that there is one God, the only Creator, he does not hesitate to mention gods in the plural, as found in mythology. Everything is merely symbolic, he says, "Comme tout est symbolique dans l'existence des hommes signalés par les dieux." (51) At times Ballanche uses the image of multiple gods who exert an influence over men's lives, in a pagan mythological manner, yet he always returns to God as the One and only. His method is to give the various gods each an attribute of the One God. They represent the scattering of man all over the universe after the fall from grace. This interpretation is Ficinian and Mystic, but to Ballanche, the many attributes as aspects or symbols of one god only, belongs to the Christian God.

It is due to the thought process of man that God has been split into different constituents, because man thinks in terms of categories and divides his history into successive ages. Likewise, he has to divide God into categories or constituent characteristics, because he cannot encompass something so complete in one thought. (52) The original thought was, however, a secret of unsounded unity. To guard the secret, man was given symbols only, so that he could approach the one truth, but not have it evident before him. God was, nevertheless, to be found in each one of these symbols.

"Dieu est tout entier dans chacun de ses symboles." (53) Ballanche, too, uses symbols in his explanation of cosmology. He employs the symbols of "thought" when he tries to recreate an image of the original unity. To him, it is symbolised by a mental process linked to a supreme creative intellect, which

is the God we speak of in the Bible.

"Le culte secret fut le gardien de la pensée première,  
l'insondable unité."(54)

In order to grasp the power of mental creativity, man has to pass through palinogenetic ages and graduate in his perfectibility. (55)

In the secret rites of the Mysteries, the unity of God had been reestablished (56), and they were evocative of the past and the future of the human race because they conserved the traditions, albeit somewhat altered and transformed. Bacchus is "le culte du principe actif de l'univers", also "le dieu de l'émancipation plébéienne" (57). The persona of Bacchus acts as a mere symbol of an existential and dynamic action, the active principle of the universe. Bacchus becomes an attitude, namely the emancipation of the plebeians. He is the image of a new age, just as Ceres personifies the past, "le culte du principe passif".(58) Apart from the Bacchus image, the new race or the nascent humanity, has many aspects. It can also be symbolised by a mythological character, the armed Pallas, half-serpent.(59) The armed warrior and the serpent are both aspects of the human race of the future, symbolising its fallibility and quest for wisdom, its recurrent life cycles, and its preparedness to struggle for the acquisition of knowledge.

The emphasis always falls on God as the one creator, who may have allowed various attributes of Himself to be found in the world, and who wants man to try and reconstruct the original unity:

"Dieu ne refuse rien à l'homme: Dieu a voulu, dès le commencement, que l'homme méritât tout..."(60)

The free interplay between Christianity and paganism could only be effected through mythology. Ballanche consequently made an essential decision when he opted for using a well-known fable, that of Orpheus, to illustrate his thoughts on history and cosmology. In his choice of the myth as narrative vehicle, he ensured that he could incorporate a

much wider field of experience in his historic document. Due to his mythological approach to historiography, Ballanche is enabled to use Christianity for the purpose of illuminating man à propos regeneration. When he speaks of the rebirth of man's soul, he uses an essentially Christian phrase, but his intent is not wholly religious. One could speak of a philosophico-religious approach to palingenesis, which becomes clear when one analyses Ballanche's usage of the word "soul".

He does not employ the word in the usual, Catholic sense, but likens it to intelligence. (61) Man has the ability to be reborn, because of his free intellect. This allows him to be perfectible. Due to man's intelligence, he should realise that everything does not end with this life. Ballanche, like Rousseau, places much emphasis on man's freedom and ability to better himself, both of which can only happen when man's intelligence promises him another life after this one. (62) To Rousseau, the soul is immortal, to Ballanche, it is the soul/intellect which will be regenerated. From certain questions asked by Ballanche, we can deduct that soul and intelligence are the same to him. He wants to know whether there is cyclical progression in the essence which eventually becomes man. Had intelligence always existed, but in an obscure form? Would intelligence, when it left man's body, continue on a never-ending evolution?

"Cette essence, avant d'être la substance humaine, doit-elle s'élaborer, se perfectionner, subir des transformations successives, jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit arrivée à l'état où elle est mûre pour la manifestation humaine, c'est-à-dire pour la manifestation première de l'intelligence?"(63)

When Ballanche speaks of man's soul living on after his corporeal death, he means man's intelligence, the thinking part of him. This is identical to the human essence, which remains the same forever.

"Elle tendrait à s'élever dans une plus haute sphère,

mais sans y être absorbée, sans cesser d'être elle-même."(64)

Ballanche deviates from the Indian mystics who believe that the ultimate state is one of annihilation of the soul and total absorption in the universe. In their doctrines, nothing begins, nothing ends, nothing is. Everything has an infinite nature, to which Ballanche is not partial (65), because his is a theory of progress, it is dynamic due to the dialectic of life and death, and does not abound in an infinite void. He says that in India, birth, life and death are all equally indifferent. Everything is absorbed in a universal being, the absolute being, which has no limits. In that atmosphere, man's soul is but a drop of water of no consequence. (66) According to Indian philosophy, nothingness is the ultimate experience. Time is of no consequence, because eternity is just a great big void. Duration and material forms are just illusions, as there can be no measure of continuity or matter in a void. The symbol of immutability is the ocean, an ocean with no tides or waves, eternally without a bottom or a shore, untouched by the tumult of thought or feeling. (67)

When Ballanche refers to the human soul or intellect, he necessarily links it to measurable commodities: time and matter, especially the former. This allows him to elaborate on his theory of individual immortality, which is not permanent, nor immobile. The emphasis on the individual soul's immortality is a Christian attitude, but Ballanche's interpretation is not purely Christian, because of his doctrine that the soul is intellect, which is not a Biblical concept. Ballanche uses a Christian vocabulary to express a philosophical theory, because he lacks a scientific vocabulary. His vocabulary is not suited to his analysis, because he uses a religious register to describe social history. A lack of appropriate words as tools of expression results in Ballanche's talking for example about life after death, when in fact he means the cultural legacy of one age taken over by a new age. The emphasis does not fall on the Christian aspect inherent in man, but on the existence of

cultural changes. By speaking of an individual soul that lives on after death, Ballanche is using a metaphor for cycles, for dialectical time.

The ultimate destiny of the soul/intellect, says Ballanche, is to become, "après des myriades de siècles, une intelligence créatrice, toujours sous le gouvernement du Dieu suprême." (68) Man will forever be ruled by the supreme God, but eventually, after several palingeneses, he will acquire the creative faculty. The intellect he acquires will create worlds analogous to the power accorded them, according to each one's merit. The ultimate destiny is thus an individual grant of creativity according to merit. Ballanche's palingenesis does not describe what happens to the soul when the body dies. The soul is reborn to live another life, but Ballanche does not say in what material state, if in such a state at all. He speculates freely on what becomes of the body and proposes no scientific theory or provides no proof. He speaks of fantastic shapes floating up above in the atmosphere, ghost-like, without any substance. (69) His description of the world of shadows and fires conforms with the allegorical Biblical conception of the world after death. This is mixed with the popular view of ghosts in the netherworld, ghosts of mere volume without much shape or duration. They are thus pictured as essentially perishable and do not share the fate of the soul or intelligence, a Plotinian conception. In the Ennéades, Plotinus (205-270) spoke of a diversity of ghosts as opposed to the three hypostases under which God is realised: soul, intelligence and unity. Ballanche's conviction that our knowledge proceeds gradually to an experience of our multiple senses and the unity of the soul, and his vision of spirit is akin to that of Leibniz, whose Discourse on Metaphysics exposed the nature of spirits, monads of the highest grade, whose destiny was melioration in the cosmic system. This progress was towards perfectibility in a community of spirits, a conception attractive to Ballanche in his palingenetic attitude to man's destiny.



Christianity, to Ballanche, comprises the notion of responsibility for one's actions, for one's destiny. Man's destiny is different to that of all other created things, because he has the consciousness of his own being, the responsibility of his own life, so that he cannot "se perdre au sein de la vie universelle." (70) Man is free, he has a responsibility to perfect himself, to partake of progress and development, to try and reconquer the lost unity.

"l'homme a besoin de tout apprendre, et les animaux savent tout ce qu'ils doivent savoir. Voilà pourquoi l'homme se perfectionne, et les animaux ne se perfectionnent point." (71)

Man was responsible for his own fall, and is thus responsible for his own progress and salvation. The question is when he acquired his sense of responsibility, and how this happened. The acquisition of responsibility is explained through the tale of Prometheus. This is closely linked to another story, namely that of Job which teaches that humility is an essential constituent of man's progressive development. Ballanche uses a mythological and a Biblical tale to illustrate his theory of responsibility and immortality, thus combining pagan and Christian traditions.

It is difficult to describe how the human will becomes a force in this world, and at the same time that it first manifests itself, it is perverted. (72) The human will is required to awaken man's dormant faculties, to enrich them and render them consonant with the universal harmony. Man's faculties should identify with his own nature, his own will, and his own subsequent course of action. Man needs to tune in to himself to achieve, because he has the capability within himself to do whatever. The prerequisite is to assume responsibility for his actions. Man has within himself the power to ensure his own regeneration, to acquire knowledge of his own nature. Orpheus painted the progressive march of mankind effected by man himself, in the past and in the future:

"Il vit l'homme appelé à vaincre constamment les lois de

la nécessité, à se perfectionner malgré le destin."

(73)

Destiny is not an insurmountable factor in human life.

Ballanche states that the judaic traditions have preserved this neverending quest to perfect man, because there existed a bi-natured character like Prometheus, who could link man and deity. History speaks of this link having existed, and man had the courage to go in search of the restitution thereof: to reunite the human and the divine. Instinct was the driving factor "qui les pousse à accomplir les pensées immortelles." (74) The question is posed whether man would take his quest so far as to subject destiny to his will. In the mean time, all he could do to brighten his fate, was to labour incessantly. If, for one moment, he relaxed the efforts of his intellect and of his hands, he would lose all the power he had over his own fate. (75) Man's task is to perfect himself, despite destiny. This has always been the case, especially in the judaic traditions, in which the belief is that man can better himself (76), even though progress be at the price of suffering.

There is a definite law that governs all things, including man in his social state. This depends on "celle qui régit l'univers, qui gouverne les temps." (77) Every nation, every dynasty is obliged by a primitive law, to try and work out the general enigma of humanity and the particular enigma that the specific dynasty has to represent. Not only does every nation have its own destiny, but every social group has a destiny of its own. This destiny may not always seem clear to man, but it has been predetermined according to laws that govern the universe. Ballanche employs two tales to give examples of man's inescapable destiny. He speaks of Job and Prometheus, both of whom had to come to terms with their particular destiny.

The Egyptian priests tell Thamyris that one of the first revelations of the immortality of the soul is contained in the ancient poem of Job. This traditional tale is also to be

found in Arab culture, in which they speak of a man who was familiar with all the pleasures and miseries of the human condition. The Romantics were fascinated by Islam and the tales of its culture. Shelley, for example, in his "Revolt of Islam", used "intellectual" poetry to express a metaphysical notion of a nation's holy war. He endowed his poem with a Romantic symbolism, like he did in the Prometheus Unbound, in order to advocate reform of man's circumstances. Ballanche operated in the same vein, using myth as poetry in order to contemplate socio-cultural change. He employs the figure of Job not in a purely Christian tradition, but draws inspiration from the judaic belief that Job was a counsellor of the pharaoh. The choice of Job as an illustration of his thought is a fortunate one, for the Biblical book has no obvious relation to the history of Israel, and it transcends both national and time barriers. Job was thought to have lived at the time of Israel's captivity in Egypt, where he was a servant and dignitary of the pharaoh. This makes him a contemporary of Moses and also a prophet. In addition, Job was a heretic and a blasphemer, reasons for his suffering through tests. Ballanche saw in Job an appropriate example of expiation, because the myths and opinions concerning his origin, the time in which he lived, his character traits and eventual righteousness, were so manifold. As polemics concerning Job had raged since the earliest centuries, with no consensus ever having been reached on him, the figure grew in popular legend and Ballanche could incorporate the saintly pagan into his mythological interpretation of the Bible. Ballanche is thinking in the spirit of the early Christian Church, which sought to encompass all peoples and beliefs, be they pagan, in a theology of redemption through the incarnation of Christ. The standard views of Job as they developed in Christian tradition are described in the Moralia on Job of Gregory the Great (d.604), who summarises the tradition of Job as the teaching of Church doctrines and the proper modes of Christian conduct, leading to eternal salvation.

Ballanche's Job is depicted among his people, who were indignant that earthly goods had not been distributed equally among them. Thus Job explains to them that there is a reason for God's action. He wanted certain people to be worthy of giving, others of receiving, but in the end, "toujours les bienfaits viennent de lui." (78) Job says to his people:

"Au reste, qu'important les biens et les maux? N'y a-t-il pas une autre vie?" (79)

Ballanche proposes the hypothesis that earthly gains alone are not sufficient to keep man content, because these are not lasting. Man wants other pleasures, other joys in life. Therefore he has to believe in another life, because if he had no faith that life would be better in the Hereafter, during existence in a higher sphere, his life would be one of perpetual misery, doubts and discouragements.

From this story can be gained the doctrine of the soul's immortality, as a compensation for the shortcomings of this world - it is a "triste hypothèse, l'insuffisance des biens de ce monde, et leur instabilité." (80) To make His ways easier understood, God has given man the caterpillar as symbol of eternal life. The caterpillar constructs his own tomb with threads of silk and feeds on the perfume of flowers. (81) Like the phoenix, whose death is brought about by himself, the act of dying is associated with sensual pleasure. Sweet-smelling wood and flowers seem to be conducive to the intoxicating experience of dying. The act of dying should be conceived of as a joy, because it heightens man's awareness and perception not only of the world around him, but also of the world to which he has just gained entry.

Job points out to an inconsolable mother whose virgin daughter has just died that though earthly life has departed from her body, immortality shines forth from her face.

"Regarde si tu ne vois pas un noble sourire sur ses lèvres, et si ces paupières doucement fermées n'annoncent pas une âme qui s'occupe en silence de

hautes pensées. Oui, ce sont les pensées nouvelles de l'autre vie." (82)

The passing to another sphere is noble and should therefore make those who remain behind, happy. The solemn calmness on the face of the dead shows that they have found peace. Those who are already a part of the eternal reign are thankful when their realm receives another "céleste compagne." (83) The Hereafter that Ballanche sketches here is one of tranquillity and beatitude, and although he does not speak of angels as such, one gets the distinct impression that he envisages a traditional Biblical image of heaven.

Ballanche stresses that all will be explained, provided man believes in the immortality of the soul. (84) The question that is often posed concerning the soul of sinners after death, is answered thus by Ballanche: if the human intellect flies from the body at the time of its destruction, as for example the phoenix, the soul of sinners has to be immortal too. All men would partake of eternity, regardless of good and evil, but those who are not worthy of it, would not be initiated into the secrets of eternal justice. Their souls would be subject to more extensive purifications. (85)

Immortality is not only for a select few, it embraces everybody, but at different levels of understanding. Some may experience eternal life, without ever attaining wisdom about life and death. Ballanche adheres to the Biblical division at the Last Judgment of those who are saved and those who are damned, but states emphatically that eternal life is promised to all.

For man to understand something about life and death, he had to be patient and wait for God to illuminate him. Job wanted to force the issue and was duly punished. The conversations between God and Job were revealed to Thamyris, whose soul was drained by the experience, and his body felt "brisé dans ses ressorts les plus intimes." (86) Coming in touch with cosmic wisdom was not an ordinary experience, but tapped man's resources in front of such revelations. Thamyris describes

his initiation, his acquisition of wisdom, as a tumultuous, stormy happening. His eyes were astounded, his ears full of terror, with sweat pearls on his face. Storms such as man could never realize raged everywhere. Oracles that formidable could only be accompanied by the most cruel of calamities:

"la hauteur de la science se mesure par la rigueur de l'épreuve." (87)

The more complicated the science or explanation, the more difficult the test one is submitted to. God revealed as much as man would ever be allowed to know, not only to Job, but also to Thamyris, who experienced this indirectly through the account of the Egyptian priests. Ballanche takes care to describe this acquisition of knowledge in terms of great upheaval, like to the creation of the earth from chaos. The poet Thamyris seemed to be subject to dizziness while his soul wandered across the world. It seemed as if his own thought assisted in the beginning of all things, for his experiences were so vivid that he could feel how the atoms attracted and repulsed each other during creation. (88)

Ballanche speaks in cosmic terms, with an immense vision that later found an echo in the poetry of Victor Hugo. He envisages a vast cosmogony with celestial drama taking place. Creation, to Ballanche, is a magic act, which, he feels, is continuous. (89)

Once man had gained knowledge of the universe, once he had been exposed to a certain degree of initiation, he could experience its harmony, for everything in this world was a part of one harmonious whole. (90) All is not chaos forever, nor is existence in this world disordered. There is a definite superior stratum of harmony, not only among phenomena of this world, but also among heavenly bodies. When man's abode had been prepared, he took possession of the air, the light, the meteors, the elements, the plants and the animals, and gave names to all places, beings and things. At first he contemplated the earth and his immediate surroundings, to get to know his own nature. Then he lifted his eyes to the sky, and realised that there were many more

aspects of himself, many more complex facets to his own abilities, that he had been aware of. Thus man's progressive journey of discovery of the self and the cosmos started.

The Egyptian priests recount a second story to Thamyris, namely the Prometheus myth. Ballanche's viewpoint being that the poets of the first ages were interpreters, not creators, he proposes that his myth was a translation into terrestrial language of an ancient cosmogonic event, not necessarily rendered in language. There is truth in ancient traditions, but often this is veiled by a brilliant light that blinds ordinary man, but not the eyes of the sages. The link between these immortal verses and the people is mythology, the creation of verbal fables, such as the Prometheus account. To Ballanche, Job is the symbol of man's humility in the face of worldly goods and imminent death, Prometheus is the symbol of man assuming responsibility for his life. Prometheus stole the fire from the Titanic gods and so ruined man's innocent and blissful life forever. He became a symbol of the original division of good and evil. The Caucasian vulture who torments Prometheus bound to his rock, symbolises the perpetual suffering of man who has entered the ways of science without being invited there:

"ses entrailles, sans cesse renaissantes, ont été  
livrées à l'insatiable faim d'un vautour immortel."

(91)

Jupiter, who was then the new king of the heavens, had been insulted because the science of fire had been stolen away from its exclusive domain. Ballanche does not hesitate to describe the gory detail of Prometheus' punishment. He wants to warn man graphically that he should not consider all of life to be easy. Certain tests have to be undergone in order to purify man and act as a witness to his perfectibility.

Several questions regarding the myth of Prometheus are posed by Ballanche. Was Prometheus really wrong? Why was he condemned? Had he not acted for the general benefit of mankind? Was he punished merely because his act was against

the will of the ruling force? Had the primitive poet perhaps reacted too pessimistically to human destiny? Had he perhaps distorted what had really happened? How much of the account was really true?

The same questions Ballanche asks in relation to the primitive poet, bother him with regard to the poet of another era, the Christian age. How can the poet be sure that those who wrote the Bible, spoke the truth?

"Le poète d'un âge chrétien, qui a reçu la véritable initiation, et qui s'est imposé la tâche de répéter ces récits antiques, est-il sûr de ne pas s'être involontairement laissé tromper par sa propre inspiration? est-il sûr de ne pas confondre en ce moment la science devenue celle de tous avec la science des vieux sanctuaires?" (92)

When Ballanche mentions a "poet of the Christian age", he leaves us with a problematic expression, especially because he is so meticulous in his choice of words. One can deduct that he is evidently referring to Orpheus or Thamyris, neither of which was a Christian poet, but belonged to the pagan tradition. Such a concept is not valid until one can speak of Dante, generally considered to be the first Christian poet. Ballanche's syncretic attitude makes him abandon the boundaries separating Christianity from the pagan ages and use a Christian vocabulary in a non-Christian context. According to the prisca theologia, the pagan tradition could anyway be accommodated in the Christian. Thamyris was not sure how he had to interpret this ancient tale, his anxiety and incertitude express themselves clearly because he does not know how much of the myth is true. (93) His reaction reinforces what Ballanche says all along: namely, that not all of the secrets of history and life and death would be revealed to man at once. Fragments may come to his attention, but these provide a very incomplete understanding. He makes an important statement about revelation, saying that it is either too incomplete or too complete, in which case too difficult for man to comprehend.



(94)

After careful consideration Thamyris makes more sense of the Prometheus myth. He understands that the punishment was because of his pride in being the emancipator of the human race. Prometheus congratulated himself in a calm voice that rang out through the storm, underlining his courage that accepted destiny without a trace of fear. Because Prometheus could not be humble, he had to suffer, and accepted it thus, provided it brought him glory as the emancipator of the human race.

"Oui, dit Prométhée, j'accepte la douleur pour la gloire. Voilà que maintenant les hommes sont en quelque sorte devenus mon ouvrage; ils ont reçu de moi l'intelligence et la science. Les dieux avaient façonné une argile, j'ai donné une âme à cette argile. L'homme me devra ses travaux futurs." (94)

Prometheus thought he could perfect the human race, through establishing an archetypal model and giving life to it. He came from the race of the Titans and had more power than Orpheus, who was from the race of mortals. Prometheus touched on a divine nature, because of his parentage, but was also partly human, because of his faculties and affections. This dual nature would become his torment, because he wanted to act like God. If, however, he had not taken the initiative and pitied the obscure destiny of man who lived merely from the fruits of uncultivated land, the way would not have been paved for Orpheus to instruct man. Prometheus took the first step in enlightening man, by giving him fire/science. Orpheus would further extend man's powers, by teaching him about society. Like Orpheus, Prometheus was a culture hero, who was not responsible for creation, but completed it, by making the world fit for human life. He was the creator of culture, the bringer of health to man and mankind.

Man participates in creation, because he acts in a social state. His power is not restricted by faits accomplis, he can always exert some influence over his destiny. He is free to

act. Man can discover for himself why things happen and obtain clarity in his own mind about what has happened, by reconstructing the past according to his own ideas. This faculty is analogous to that of foresight, because both history and the future are successive and eternal. As a result of his assimilatory powers, man can push back the frontiers of Christianity to the cosmogonic ages, because Christianity did not happen as an event, but was always a part of man's traditions. Ballanche incorporates Christianity in a tradition where it really had no place. He assumes that the general beliefs or traditions of the Christian religion had always existed in history, because all religions have so much in common. He refuses to date Christianity according to the modern conception thereof which limits it to a particular era. To Ballanche, Christianity was not a fact, as the nineteenth century historians like Fustel de Coulanges in La Cité antique (1864), Renan in the Dialogues philosophiques (1876) or Michelet in Principes de la philosophie de l'histoire would have it, related to a cultural structure. In conformity with his opinion of history as a long evolution, Christianity assumes an indefinite aspect, a regenerated tradition as opposed to a structure. This allows man to condense all of foregoing history into one algebraic formula: that of the fall from grace and man's subsequent rehabilitation. History is consequently given a wholly Christian aspect:

"Voilà comment nous sommes parvenus à reculer le christianisme jusqu'aux âges cosmogoniques." (96)

Christianity, to Ballanche, dates back to the indefinite point in time when Prometheus stole the fire. Man then became aware of good and evil and had to assume responsibility for his actions, or in other words, his continuous and palingenetic development. Ever since, man has been identical to when he first emerged, at a moment that is further in the past than even myth can describe:

"Le genre humain prend donc en lui-même la loi continue et palingénésique de son développement. Il est donc à

présent ce qu'il fut à l'origine, c'est-à-dire au moment qui suit le moment mystérieux où nous commençons à l'apercevoir sortant de l'horizon du dogme, au-delà de l'horizon du mythe." (97)

By speaking of a "law" of development, Ballanche signifies in the biological evolutionary sense that there exists laws in nature. To the nineteenth century scientists, these laws were external and did not reside in our mind. Ballanche adheres to one part of the objectivist viewpoint when he admits to a "loi continue et palingénésique" that regulates man's development. However, the regulation process in nature (here history) is internalised in man to be given a subjective aspect. Ballanche says "le genre humain prend donc en lui-même la loi", humanity assumes this law, makes it its own, through a rational and sensory understanding thereof. Man's development is thus a law of nature as well as a law of our soul/intelligence. Palingenesis is a scientific law applied to nature, as well as a natural law, applied to science.

The assumption of responsibility was a progressive step in man's development, tied to the beginning of Christianity. If man fails to practise Christianity, says Ballanche, he might revert to his primitive state before the advent of Christianity. (98) Christianity immutably influences man's destiny, both in ancient and modern times. (99) Ballanche explains his own devoted Catholicism through a free interplay of pagan and Christian elements. When he started contemplating the past, he invoked all the muses, but the one that took him by the hand and held all the keys to lock and unlock the secrets of the universe, was the Christian muse, "sibylle de la vérité" (100). This is yet another example of how Ballanche invokes Christianity when he is dealing with a matter that is essentially pagan. The concept of a "Christian muse" is a Renaissance one, influenced by the prisca theologia. The muses belong to the mythical tradition, but Ballanche fuses them with a Christian era in a grand design

of a past without breaks, a past that consisted of both of cultural and social traditions and includes pagan and Christian characters alike. Christianity derives from and interacts with pagan traditions, he implies, through bringing the muses into the account. He nevertheless insists that Christianity was the only true religion, the only true revelatory doctrine concerning the cosmos, because in it is re-established the original unity of mankind. (101)

Diversity in the social state exists, as far as separate castes and classes, languages and races are concerned, but Christianity is the great equalising force.

"L'abolition des classes et l'affranchissement de la propriété sont le résultat du Christianisme évolutif."  
(102)

To Ballanche, the culmination of Christianity or the present cycle would be the institution of a general democracy.

Even though there is diversity, under the Christian doctrine, everyone is liable to initiation. Cosmogonic wisdom was brought within everyone's reach, because Christianity is the popularisation and generalisation of initiation. (103)

Christianity is in accordance with the ancient doctrines of the Mysteries, with their traditions of test and expiation. In primitive times, these Mysteries were understood only by the initiated, but Christianity brought understanding to the multitude. Christianity continues a cosmic tradition and expresses the same laws that have educated mankind throughout the ages, but in a more accessible manner. The fundamental laws of society are successive and perfectible, just as man is perfectible, and they are expressed through Christianity. (104) Genesis is cosmogonic in that it recounts the primitive history of mankind (105), like the Indian Ramayana.

Christianity summarises the past, as far as we can distinguish it. Christianity explains that there is a definite design in history. Neither Prometheus nor Orpheus was a random example in Ballanche's account, for they both demonstrate a compliance with the pre-arranged order of things. Prometheus had said:

"Le destin de l'immobilité et du silence est vaincu par moi; par moi, règne sur le monde le destin de la succession et du progrès." (106)

He acted as a catalyst in the progressive development of the human race. Thereafter, man himself was responsible for his actions, his destiny.

"Ainsi l'homme a acquis la capacité du bien et du mal; ainsi il a acquis l'imputabilité de ses actions, la responsabilité de sa vie." (107)

From that moment onward, man had to perfect himself, and the best way for him to act, was in society. Man had all of his future life on earth and all of his future existence in the cosmos to assume responsibility for. The present moment appeared to be filled with suffering only, because man searches in vain to solve the great enigma of his existence. (108) But although there may at present be upheaval and violence, eventually there will be a return to harmony and peace.

Man can do nothing about his present circumstances.

"il nous est interdit de deviner; quant à présent, notre partage est de gémir." (109)

The beginning and the ending of this world will always seem anathema to man, because he cannot do anything about its riddles but have faith that they will be solved at some point in the future. (110) The life that we lead on earth is enclosed between an apparent birth and an apparent death, which is only a part of our total existence. Life on earth is a manifestation in time, but it is not the complete picture. (111) This life on earth is a small section of man's overall existence in the cosmos. It serves only as a vehicle for expiation and perfectibility. Man's future life will be arrived at through a series of tests which will gradually allow him to become more perfect. His next life will resume exactly where this one left off, provided he has profited from the tests. (112) Life is eternally palingenetic and initiatory. The attempts to reconquer the past, to assimilate it anew, are a part of man's initiation. His thoughts and his

imagination are preoccupied with depicting and scrutinising his origins. (113) Only to those who have been initiated, does the past present a complete picture. Ballanche advocates selective illumination, and says that the new initiation would be given to certain castes only, so that social hierarchies would ensue. When speaking of his own day, Ballanche holds that the present initiators were the severe patricians who have become the Titans of the civil world. They, in their own turn, would disappear, to make way for the plebeians, "car tout est enchaîné et progressif dans l'univers." (114) Thamyris, the prophet, recounts that for one instant, he too became a man whose faculties existed, dormant at first, then awakening, and finally participating in creation. This entails a responsibility both for his thoughts and his acts, a responsibility which he could not assume with success. Having failed this test, he was condemned to being successive, instead of being permanent and stable.

Assuming responsibility for one's life, one's thoughts and one's acts, is one part of the pivotal question concerning our existence. By doing what Prometheus had done, Thamyris condemned himself, he became a universal man, "dispersé par la génération," (115) because he wanted to take part in creation too soon. Thamyris realised that his search, his successive state, would not last forever, but that he would acquire permanence and stability again when he merited it. In order to reach that point in his development, he would have to be rehabilitated through a series of tests:

"Je compris ainsi la raison des épreuves de l'humanité, épreuves dont les mystères d'Isis offrent une image. (116).

Rehabilitation, once it is merited, would take place through rebirth or palingenesis:

"La palingénésie est la loi réparatrice." (117)

Palingenesis is a natural law, says Ballanche, it is also an atonement, a reparation through which man must pass.

Rehabilitation, once it is merited, would take place through

rebirth or palingenesis. After having assumed too much responsibility for his own life too soon and having taken part in active creation, man falls from grace. He is then rehabilitated through a gradual process of ascendancy, until he has sufficient knowledge of the universe. All the while man is free to decide about his own destiny. Initiation or truth could not be learnt externally. It resides in man, waiting to be discovered by those worthy of illumination. (118) Ballanche proposes three maxims for those who are to be initiated: No-one is worthy of the truth if he does not discover it for himself. No-one can attain the truth if he does not discover it for himself. No-one can understand truth if he had not been able to discover it for himself.

(v) Orpheus and mythology

Why does Ballanche choose Orpheus as an illustration of palingenesis? The implication is made that any myth might have been adopted, because all myths are archetypes of peoples, traditions and epochs. In this case, Ballanche employs Orpheus to explain his theory of cultural changes to the common man. More precisely, the Orpheus myth is used to explore the dark period before history. Orpheus represents pre-Christian traditions, and he represents man's gradual initiation into the mysteries of his existence. Ballanche uses Orpheus with the same motif as the Renaissance neo-Platonists used the prisci theologi, namely to have a past without breaks and to preserve the continuity of history.

The Orphée was started in 1818 and only published after ten years' reflection. The poem allies the Genesis account of Christianity and the Orpheus myth of paganism. It is a complete exposition of Ballanche's thought, which can be seen to have attained maturity as opposed to an earlier work, such as the Antigone, which does not operate on the same universal level, but remains essentially a personal or private drama.

The Orpheus myth is adapted to Ballanche's own ends. Since the early Renaissance, this particular myth has been used in manifold ways, and in a variety of guises. Orpheus, being one of the great initiators of all ages, is closely linked with a Romantic notion of creation, poetry and religion. During the Renaissance, already in the early fifteenth century, there reigned an enthusiasm for the Orphic Hymns, one section of ancient texts known as the Orphica, which also contained fragments of poetry supposedly written by Orpheus, and the Argonautica, dating from the fourth century. These texts were written at different periods and by different authors. The differences were not highlighted by the Renaissance philosophers, whose syncretic approach would have them grouped together as the genuine sacred writings of a very



ancient, allegorical religious tradition. These fragments are significant because they created and reinforced a belief in the compatibility of Platonism with Christianity. Orphic writings form a significant part of the prisca theologia, scriptures by ancient thinkers, who all assume the same religious truth, and include Zoroaster, Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato. The prisca theologia attempts to explain ancient history in a continuous state, leading from pagan tradition without a break to Christianity. During the fifteenth century the Orphic Hymns were sung in Florence and at the academy at Careggi. The musical effects were supposed to be conducive to philosophical and religious contemplation, because they harmonised dissonances in the soul, said Ficino, much in the same vein as Ballanche would esteem the powers of Orpheus' lyre when he charms the primitive Thracians.

The traditional employ by Moses and after him Orpheus and Plato of fables in an intentionally obscure manner, has two reasons: so as not to blind the ignorant with knowledge that would be too illuminating for them, and in order to express several meanings simultaneously. Moses was linked to Orpheus because he had taught the Egyptians or left them books, the knowledge whereof was revealed to Orpheus when he visited Egypt. Orpheus thus acts as an intermediary figure who would inform the gentiles of the pre-Christian revelation, which was exclusive to the Jewish race. The channel of communication was Egypt. The belief in the prisca theologia during the Renaissance paved the way for an open Christianity that would fit into a doctrine that emphasised the similarities rather than the differences between various religions. Because it allowed pagan philosophers into the history of Christianity, mythology could be used more liberally to explain primitive history. The Renaissance philosophers wanted to link Moses and Plato, or Genesis and the Timaeus, and reconcile both with a Christian doctrine. In the early sixteenth century, Ficino reopened the way to Orphic studies, although St Thomas Aquinas had already

referred to Orpheus as a poetic theologian in the Middle Ages. In France, however, a different view existed to the Italian view of the *prisca theologia*. The French were cautious about paganism and heresy and were distinctly proud of and patriotic about the Celtic Druids, who, together with Orpheus, were regarded as expressive of an ancient religious tradition that allowed all gods as part of one creational system. Some of the sixteenth century French writers in whose works the *prisca theologia* plays an important part, are Lefèvre d'Etaples, a humanist and evangelical reformer, Pontus de Tyard, the philosopher of the Pléiade, Ramus, the anti-aristotelian logician, Philippe de Mornay, the Protestant controversialist, Symphorien Champier, the philosopher/historian from Lyons, Ballanche's home town, an important intellectual centre during the first half of the sixteenth century, Amaury Bouchard, a friend of Rabelais and the author of a platonic treatise on immortality of the soul, Louis Le Caron, author of the platonic *Philosophie* (1555) and Louis Le Roy, a translator of Plato and the *Hermetica*. Of these, the Lyonnais Champier especially foreshadowed Ballanche's thought that there was no sense of any break in the continuity of the tradition which leads from the Druids and other *prisci theologi* through Plato to the Christian revelation, hence through the medieval theologians to his own times, the Renaissance. Ballanche does not mention Champier, but uses his viewpoint to create a theory of cultural continuity throughout cyclical changes. Also in his theory of language, Champier said the same as Ballanche would four centuries later: that the word is a symbol allowing multiple interpretations.

All these writers and thinkers used the *Orphica*, the *Hermetica* and Plato to show the universality and antiquity of the belief in one God, the Trinity, creation *ex nihilo*, the immortality of the soul, and an afterlife of punishments and rewards. The *Hermetica* consisted of 17 treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (middle of the first to end of the third century), fragments of Stobaeus and Apuleius' *Asclepius*, and

although they were written in Greek and displayed Greek philosophy, they had an Egyptian setting. The popular strand of Hermetic literature dealt with astrology and the occult sciences, while the more initiated strand conveyed the aim of Hermeticism, similar to that of Gnosticism: deification or rebirth of man through the knowledge (gnosis) of the unique transcendent God, the world, and man. These writings stem from a philosophy cultivated by the Arabs, through whom it reached the West in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. During the Reformation, the French Protestants had only contempt for the prisci theologi. Even though Erasmus (1469-1536) regards pagan civilisation as a providential preparation for the general acceptance of Christianity in the Institution du prince chrétien (1515) and De pueris instituendis (1529), he subordinates these writings to the Gospels. Erasmus rejects the tradition of the prisca theologia because it represents the metaphysical side of religion, which was especially attractive to Ballanche. The prisci theologi, said Erasmus, foreshadowed this aspect of Christianity, which attracted the Romantics and hermetic writers of the illuminist tradition, such as Fabre d'Olivet, who devoted several pages to Orpheus in the Discours sur l'essence et la forme de la poésie and the Histoire philosophique du genre humain. Ballanche, greatly influenced by Fabre d'Olivet, adopts Orpheus as the symbol of eternal youth and the allegory of palingenesis. Orpheus also embraces the art of memory. Orpheus plays a triple role to Ballanche: political, social and religious. He is divine inspiration but also a plebeian hero who brings progress to man in society. Orpheus the initiator places life or existence for man in the future, and with it reveals religion to social man. Through his music, poetry and fables he activates man's imagination.

It is exactly this imaginative feature of Orpheus that makes him so attractive to the Romantic writers. Orpheus lies at the heart of poetic and religious Romanticism, because he illustrates the destiny and especially the duty of the poet.

Ballanche is concerned with human tradition rather than history, and the symbol that clothes his myth is Orpheus. The tradition remains the same throughout the ages, be there metamorphosis and palingenesis. Ballanche's Orphic interpretation of man's cultural legacy owes much to Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), in his concern for a personalised Christianity together with mysticism. In Des trois principes de l'essence divine (1619) and De la triple vie de l'homme (1620), Boehme stated that God reveals himself in nature through the occurrence of rebirth, which is not an event, but a process, one that is never completed. All of life took part in an organic cycle, viewed by man as a vicious circle from which there is no escape. To Boehme, life incarnates itself in a cyclical pattern, which consists of relatively independent moments composing the whole. Boehme's two contrary forces, eternally engaged in a struggle, creating a girating movement, are linked in their mutual hostility. Ballanche gave an identity to Boehme's eternally revolving forces, and called them life and death, engaged in a dialectical pattern. The metaphysical doctrine of Boehme claims man to be an incomplete being who has to achieve his own self through his actions. This is analogous to Ballanche's doctrine of perfectibility, requiring man to labour at his own salvation, which takes on an intellectual, a moral and a social character.

Ballanche's symbolic interpretation of existence is limited to myth and metaphor, and does not become a hermetic game of numbers and signs as in the Kabbalistic or hermetic traditions, of which the best known to him was illuminism, the eighteenth century version of hermeticism. Through his associate Fabre d'Olivet (1768-1825), Ballanche became acquainted with the illuminists, and in particular Saint-Martin (1743-1803). The martinist aim to refute rationalism was close to Ballanche's conviction, clearly influenced by their conception of the role of the poet. Saint-Martin, in L'homme de désir (1790) and Le nouvel homme (1792), speaks of metamorphosis and not rupture in tradition,

in a spiritualising movement towards illumination.

Ballanche's Orphism was foreshadowed by the martinist emphasis on man as the microcosm vis à vis the universal macrocosm, a cosmic doctrine upheld by the Jewish mystic Martinez Pasqualis (1727-79) in the Traité de la réintégration des êtres dans leurs propriétés, vertus et puissances spirituelles et divines (1842). The German mystic philosopher Jacob Boehme and the Swede Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1722) also influenced Ballanche's belief in the gradual initiation of the soul/intellect, and the desire to discover the true religion, devoid of fables and allegory. Ballanche became the personification of theosophic mysticism in his day and age, regarded himself as a new Orpheus, while maintaining a close association with pure theosophists like Coëssin (1782-1843) whose Les Neuf Livres was a study in mysticism and pontifical theocracy. A significant influence on Ballanche's thought was Schelling (1775-1854), whose objective idealism was demonstrated in Les Dieux de Samothrace.

The classical episodes contained in the Orpheus myth were not necessarily used in the Romantics' writings, which rather exuded a general Orphic ambiance. Lamartine, Vigny, Hugo, Quinet, Nerval, Guérin, Gautier, Baudelaire, Banville, Leconte de Lisle and Mallarmé all had some affinity with the Orphic cult of the nineteenth century, which links Romanticism and Symbolism. One reason is that Orphism is syncretic and allows for polytheism, monotheism and pantheism. The Romantics preferred two kinds of Orpheus: the Orpheus of the Pyramids, initiated in the mysteries of Isis, and Orpheus communing with nature, initiated through contemplation. However, a scholarly approach to Orpheus also prevailed, such as in the poetry of Maurice de Guérin. Here one can speak of pantheistic paganism, with Orpheus assuming a particular, definite role.

Ballanche's is not a scholarly Orpheus. His Orpheus is an initiated prophet, who spreads his wisdom among mankind by

means of song. Orpheus the bard charms nature and people alike with his lyre, music being an expression of the harmony between soul and body. Ballanche's decision to use Orpheus in a liberal interpretation of the traditional character, stems from his attitude to the myth, influenced by Vico. Vico, whose influence Ballanche readily acknowledges, regards the myth as a cult based on spontaneous ideational interpretation of the past, but which is always limited by a radical viewpoint of reason as the germinating element. Therefore reason linked with interpretation was the only way to view foregoing history, says Vico. His attitude is platonic, because he adopts the stand that there existed a classical universality, which could only be attained through the elimination of worldly phenomena. All of history, to Vico, is assimilated in an "ideal" pattern, ever-recurrent. What we remember thereof, is recounted as myth. Ballanche is highly influenced by this doctrine of Vico's, but does not endow his own theory with an aristotelian rational base. His conception of the myth is more romantic, his basis being tradition and social culture. The myth grew out of the people, and the people in their turn imitated the fable. Between the people and the myth or fable was a spontaneous poetic interaction, not hampered by a materialistic approach to time, idea and phenomenon.

In his choice of the Orpheus myth, Ballanche thus opts for the Latin version rather than the Greek (119), because the former has conserved its cosmogonic, and so too, its Romantic, character better. With hardly any concern for rational dogma, he adapts the myth to suit his own ends, namely the explanation of primitive history. The Latin version provided Ballanche with another option that appealed to his Romantic notions: a more majestic transition could be evoked from the Oriental to the Christian philosophy. His mode of operation was thus to invent a fable, then to obtain a name from ancient traditions to clothe it, and in joining the two, to create a highly original version (which he presented as a revelation) of pre-Christian history.

The Orphic epoch was the one Ballanche chose, because it is one of the first palingenetic ages of the world, or a time when great changes takes place. The fable spans a general epoch, that of all primitive palingenesis, and is not given any particular religious or traditional application.

Ballanche employs this myth in his account of the pre-Christian epoch, which is steeped in obscurity. While the Formule Générale describes historic palingenesis, the Orphée deals with primitive palingenesis. (120) These are two different means of attaining the same goal: the explanation of the workings of the universe, in a primitive and a historic era. Orpheus was conceived of not as a mythological nor a historical character. It is a name given to a tradition, a certain order of things, a certain culture. The question of his actual existence is irrelevant to Ballanche, because he can employ Orpheus in his own creative scheme.

"Orphée, tel que je l'ai conçu, n'est ni un personnage mythologique, ni un personnage historique; c'est le nom donnée à une tradition, à un ordre de choses, peu importe donc la question de son existence. Cette manière de considérer un sujet paraîtra nouvelle; je desire qu'elle ne paraisse que nouvelle; elle résulte, au reste, de l'ensemble même de mes idées." (121)

Orpheus is linked to the tradition of Dionysos-Bacchus, and not to Apollo, who is synonymous with intellectual measure. Orpheus also allowed Ballanche to invoke an Egyptian setting for his myth, because, according to the tradition, Orpheus had been to Egypt where he was instructed by temple priests before he returned to Greece to establish the cult of Demeter-Ceres. Orpheus is also part of a tradition that upholds the soul to be free without corporeal imprisonment. Orpheus signifies eternal return. He is linked to the image of poet/civilisator who communes with the harmonies and rhythms of the cosmos, and through him, the microcosm, nature and earth commune with spirits of the macrocosm. Orphism, today and in Ballanche's day, signifies metaphysical inquiétude, the rebirth and salvation of the soul. Orphic

poetry represents and suggests metamorphosis of nature and the movement of the skies inside the universal mystery. It concerns creation, man, life, death and eternity. The character is an instrument to shed light on an age that is otherwise dark and unknown to modern man, who can merely guess at its features. Ballanche is convinced that we have made very little progress in the investigation of primitive facts and that we mostly did guesswork. He does feel, however, that a breakthrough is about to be made. (122)

The origins of man still remain a mystery, a partly-revealed past, conceived of as a dark age. Ballanche is proud of his apparent gift of the required inspiration to make some kind of coherent system of history, which he does not regard as scientific at all.

"Je me suis confié à cet instinct que j'ai cru trouver en moi, et qui, au jugement de plusieurs, m'a fait raconter quelquefois l'expression juste des sentiments de l'antiquité." (123)

Like a kind of Orpheus himself, Ballanche wants to create a past, neglecting science in the attempt, but giving himself over to an intuitive rendition of mythology. He states that he had access to the spirit of ancient traditions, and that he had familiarised himself for a few moments with this necromantic lifestyle. (124)

He does not intend to write down all of history, he says, but merely chooses one strand thereof, namely that of the transformations of Egyptian traditions into Greek traditions, "devenues à leur tour traditions romaines." (125) This order of things is not necessarily the correct one, he adds, but considers it as justified because its historical pattern had been determined through very old prejudices. He admits that there may have been earlier historians who have erred in their accounts of the past, but says that these biased views have become a part of our own tradition. Ballanche says that he himself was not qualified to judge these, because the discussion thereof was still a new enterprise. Similarly, he



could not attempt to render the history of any other tradition, be it prior or contemporaneous to the one revealed by him, because even though he suspects the existence of another tradition, he had no insight into its nature.

For the situation in time of his fable, Ballanche follows Virgil. He locates its action a little before the Trojan War, which is a palingenetic event in that it heralds the end of one age and the beginning of another. Generally, this period is considered as the limit of historic time and time pertaining to fables, says Ballanche. (126) He is no doubt thinking of Homer when he makes this statement. Orpheus is made a contemporary of Hercules, for both are counted among the Argonauts. Apart from this demarkation, primitive history to Ballanche is very confusing. All seems to be obscured by a multitude of allegories, each of which undergoes several transformations in order to domesticate foreign myths. (127) Ballanche states that such chaos had ensued, that it was extremely difficult in modern times to decipher the past, even with all the philosophical light the moderns had at their disposal. What made the past even more confusing, was that the transition operated from one civilisation to another, from the Orient to the Occident, from Asia to Europe, at which moment the scene changes totally and the historian becomes all mixed up.

The allegorising of all happenings is the main obstacle. In attributing events and adventures that applied to mythological characters, to heroic (semi-historic) characters, great confusion is created. Events which should, by all rights, have remained on a cosmic scale, suddenly became associated with heroes and men, and vice versa.

"C'est ainsi qu'une des premières expéditions nautiques, celle des Argonautes, pour les Grecs, a été l'emblème d'une révolution astronomique." (128)

Just like the Argonautic expedition served as a symbol of a new age, the annals of humanity were hieroglyphic archives,

the symbols of cosmic poetry, created on diverse planispheres. Cities and characters thus became symbolic and impregnated with more meaning than if they had remained on a merely historic level. Examples of such transformations are the cities Thebes of Boetia and Troy and the characters Hercules, Osiris and Bacchus. (129) The interaction between the planetary and the earthly is also manifest in Helen, who was simultaneously the wife of Menelaus and the symbol of clarity and splendour, the name and attributes of the moon, which became a proper name.

Ballanche does not condemn this practice of allegorical and historic osmosis, as long as one system does not exclude the other. This allows for universality and individuality to be transformed into each other. Mythology allows for interaction and Ballanche sees it as his duty to reconcile those writers who have embraced the historic system and those who have accommodated the facts in an allegorical system.

"Tous ont raison lorsqu'ils ne veulent pas s'exclure mutuellement." (130)

He gives another example, that of Hercules, who is simultaneously a mythological and a historical character, and a type of man. Hercules personifies man cultivating the land, man subjecting nature. The tradition that presents Hercules as a civilising force is a Renaissance one (see chapter 2). All types or universal characters become national characters, and this transformation is possible because history and allegory or myth are not mutually exclusive. By analogy, Mercury or Hermes could become associated with all science and perceived of as types. Zoroaster likewise became the embodiment of all legislation, and a character who was the legislator par excellence. All ancient heroes are also symbols of certain characteristics or attributes.

Just like universal characters could be translated into one being, general traditions and universal facts could be appropriated to one nation. This was especially likely to happen in geography, when the same name would be used to

designate different regions or places, according to man's view of his abode. Names which had general meanings, were often given particular applications, such as Hesperic, which signifies occidental region, and was at various ages applied in turn to Epiria, Italy and Spain. Through mythology, man could employ a name in a creative or innovative way, according to the view he held of the world and his place in it. It was thus possible to create an "ideal" geography, ideal used in the Platonic sense of the word.

By mentioning these examples of how man's mind could work and invent freely, Ballanche states that it is consequently acceptable that Orpheus should reappear in many myths and variations of myths. Even though he apparently belongs in the epoch of the Trojan war because he is an Argonaut, Orpheus is a man of many ages and places. Ballanche used this rationale when he decided not to confine Orpheus to one character. He chose this image as a symbol of the past, an infinite dream, liable to a thousand reminiscences and interpretations. Fulgentius, the mythographer whose work was popular in the Middle Ages, also interpreted fables as moral allegory, using the character Orpheus to represent learning, and Prometheus to represent human nature. The role of Orpheus is to represent the whole epoch before history and one of the meanings of the word "Orpheus" is to arrange, to unite, to join. (131) Not only does Orpheus join all of foregoing history, he also joins all ancient traditions. He is the reason for what precedes the Trojan war and the symbol of a new era, the birth of the civil world. He acts as a prophet.

While Orpheus represents the epoch before history, he also signifies fifteen centuries of human history. (132) The poem, Orphée, is a condensed, or algebraic, version of the past. But what Ballanche aims to do, is push back the horizons of history, "en faisant des conquêtes successives sur la région des fables." (133) He wants to delve in the unknown and in this capacity he uses Orpheus as initiator, so as not to upset the scientific researches that have been done into the

human past. Orpheus symbolises revelation. Because he has to speak to all men, communicate all traditions, Orpheus reunites in himself the two natures of mankind: spontaneity, which characterises those who rule the future, and assimilation, characterising those who are an expression of the time. Orpheus is therefore born bi-natured, both spontaneous and assimilative, or both patrician and plebeian. (134) By choice, Orpheus is plebeian, because only then will he obtain the general sympathy of mankind:

"le plêbéien c'est l'homme même." (135)

The teachings of Orpheus illuminate and initiate the common man, which was, at the age when he walked the earth, cosmogonic man, personified by Talaon. Man was still in a very rudimentary stage of development, and Orpheus brought him knowledge of such social institutions as marriage and sepulchres. The character Thamyris (136) in the Orphée is a prophet and elucidates the king of Latium, Evander, by using Orpheus as the subject of his stories. Evander's race, the Thracians, are also in dire need of revelation, which symbolically commences with the culture of the soil. Orpheus symbolises man's sorrow, in that he shows man what the difference between good and evil is. (137) By pointing out that man has come to a fall, the ever-lasting aspect of retribution is emphasised. This universal law was taught to Orpheus, who had to find out that progress could only be gained through death and destruction. He was illuminated by Eurydice's death. Thenceforth, the name Orpheus would unite the significance of life and death. His own death brings to a close one particular age of mankind. While he ascends to a higher realm of understanding, his earthly tomb is prepared by the nine muses, mythological characters too, who ensure the continuity of his ideas, in that they act as man's inspiration throughout the ages to follow.

The character of Eurydice is essential to teach Orpheus about immortality. She cannot enter the new age, but because she remains in Orpheus' memory, he will effect her perpetuity.

Eurydice symbolises time that has passed, ages that have evolved. As such, she is a link with the mystery of our origins. She inspired the lyre of Orpheus and cristallises his thoughts, but has not the capacity in herself to enter the new age:

The blind poet Thamyris, who has to illuminate Evander, king of Thrace, acts as a mirror image of Orpheus, but one that reflects only in part what Orpheus knows. Thamyris is also a poet and a prophet, (138) but he has not yet attained the same degree of initiation. There was a fine link between him, Orpheus and the old man of the hills who dies on his own pure, the symbol of palingenesis and renewal. All three mythological characters were subject to revelation, but they had all reached different degrees of development. They can be seen to symbolise three nations or races, who follow similar courses throughout history, but each in an individual manner.

The old king Evander is the symbol of the link between cultural changes.

"Ainsi les vénérables traditions se succéderont sans être interrompues, et se perpétueront religieusement parmi les hommes." (139)

Because Evander is king of the region where a new dynasty is to establish itself, namely Italy, he is the converging factor in the creation of history. He stands at the crossroads of two eras, and two civilisations. Men from the near East, under the leadership of Aeneas, would come to his shores and there found a new royal race. The pastoral king symbolises the end of an age (140) and the beginning of a new age.

"Ce roi pasteur est destiné à rajeunir cette terre antique, en y jetant les fondements d'une force morale qui lui survivra." (141)

This function as founder of a new age and race explains why Evander has to be initiated by the poet: so that he can base the new society on moral and social traditions. The teaching

of ancient rituals is one vehicle to let us glimpse into the universal soul. (142)

This is a function particularly well-fulfilled by the muses, who are representative of mythology, just like the sibyls are linked to history. Each book of the Orphée carries the name of a muse, in order to establish a kind of harmony of the whole, yet present it in a variety of aspects. The actual employment of the muses is to place the story further back in the past, in a context that has no direct historical basis. This creates a fluidity in the past that suits Ballanche's needs perfectly: the establishment of a vague scenarium in which he can place certain characters, each as a symbol or mouthpiece of his philosophy, or rather his exposition of the supreme quest that occupies man's thoughts. The clarification of the past, which is manifest only in its development or evolution, can only be attained through indirect means, and the muses offer such a possibility. This is the one goal Ballanche has - to try and explain the laws of history. He says that he who knows what the unique goal of the human race is, knows it all. (143) Primitive religion is upheld to be no more than myth and epic.

Ballanche's employ of the myth as an explanatory vehicle for cosmic riddles anticipates the modern rebirth of the myth. The role of the archetype, which offers one original example to be copied by subsequent ages, has become an important field of study in the twentieth century, especially popularised by Mircea Eliade (b.1907). Primitive religion is upheld to be no more than myth and epic. Eliade divides religion into traditional and historic trends. The former entertains a common world outlook and adheres to eternal archetypes and recurring attempts to return to the beginning. The traditional aspect of religion is involved in an attempt to retrace and renew the process by which structure and order in the cosmos were established, consequently concluding that any understanding of history should be cyclical. Opposed to this view is the historic approach to the past, says Eliade,

characterised by its linear conception of what has been, and a belief that the meaning of the world for man is worked out in a historical process. In the twentieth century idiom of Eliade, Ballanche's is therefore a traditionalist approach to history, because he believes, mythologically, in the eternal return of the past.

NOTES: CHAPTER 2

(i) What is myth to Ballanche?

(1) Epilogue, 274.

(2) "La mythologie est une histoire condensée, et pour ainsi dire algébrique." Première addition, 4.

(3) "Les traces de l'évolution cyclique s'effacent, et la mémoire du seul fait symbolique brille dans la nuit des âges." Première addition, 5.

(4) Orphée I, 80.

(5) Epilogue, 269.

(ii) Myth and ancient history

(6) P.S., 51-2.

(7) "Il veut que les Egyptiens l'adorent d'une manière, les Grecs d'une autre, les Syriens d'une troisième; encore tous les Syriens n'ont-ils pas le même culte." P.S., 111.

(8) Première addition, 24.

(9) "Les siècles antérieurs à l'humanité actuelle sont condensés dans une formule algébrique toute merveilleuse: c'est le dogme de la déchéance et la réhabilitation."

Epilogue, 263.

(10) "C'était sans doute une manière emblématique et mythique d'inculquer l'idée fondamentale de la perfectibilité successive de l'âme humaine, à la condition des épreuves."

P.S., 113.

(11) P.S., 75-6.

(12) "une chronologie générale dont les cycles successifs sont des temps indéterminés, des périodes de civilisation, sans mesure fixe." P.S., 109.

(13) "Les muses théogoniques, les premières dans la hiérarchie intuitive; les muses cosmogoniques, qui marchent après; les muses des destinées humaines, qui viennent les dernières; toutes vierges immortelles, filles à jamais sacrées de l'inspiration de la prière, forment trois chœurs qui se succèdent et se répondent, trois chœurs différents, selon la



nature des faits confiés à la mémoire des peuples, chœurs éternellement harmonieux, dont il nous sera permis peut-être d'entendre quelques sons affaiblis." Orphée I, 78.

(14)P.S., 117.

(15)Orphée VIII, 147.

(16)"tous venus d'une source commune, tous émanés de l'éternelle vérité." Orphée VIII, 148.

(17)Orphée VIII, 150.

(18)"il dit à chaque homme qui sait l'écouter, et lui-même apprend." *ibid.*

(19)Orphée VIII, 157.

(20)"on l'avait fait passer par des palingénésies successives, où, sans perdre l'identité du moi, il avait pu pressentir les facultés départies à chaque ordre." Orphée VIII, 160.

(21)Orphée VIII, 163.

(iii) Myth and Egypt

(22)"Les dieux ont daigné gouverner eux-mêmes l'Egypte, l'aînée des nations; et ils l'ont gouvernée long-temps." Orphée IX, 229.

(23)Orphée IX, 234.

(24)Orphée VIII, 145.

(25)"nous ne devons pas non plus perdre de vue que c'est de l'Orient que partit la lumière, à l'origine, et que c'est encore dans le vieil Orient qu'il faut aller la rechercher." P.S., 51.

(26)Orphée III, 183.

(27)"N'oublions donc jamais que l'Orient est notre berceau cosmogonique et intellectuel." P.S., 252.

(28)"Les Indiens ont prodigué les siècles. L'algèbre divine de Moïse a condensé les siècles en jours cosmogoniques." P.S., 81.

(29)"le point de départ de la race humaine, point mystérieux qui ne peut être qu'un dogme ou un mythe, comme la fin des choses humaines toujours, dans toutes les croyances, fut un dogme ou un mythe." Orphée VIII, 119.

(30)"Il s'agissait pour moi de montrer l'enfantement merveilleux de l'Occident par l'Orient" Première addition, 17.

(31)P.S., 200-201.

(32)"Facultés toujours parallèles à toutes les époques; antagonisme qui fait l'initiation et le progrès." P.S., 70.

(33)"L'Egypte, image et type de toutes les initiations sociales, comme elle est image et type de l'univers, l'Egypte conserve toute la variété des institutions divines et humaines; elles y sont contemporaines les unes aux autres." Orphée VIII, 170.

(34)"L'Egypte, image du monde, ainsi que nous te l'avons expliqué, est une image aussi de l'Inde, mais une image affaiblie." ibid.

(35)"La vie, en Egypte, ne semble s'appuyer sur rien; aussi les hommes y cherchent-ils à donner de la durée à la mort." Orphée VI, 21.

(36)Orphée VI, 12.

(37)Orphée VI, 13.

(38)"Mais ce qui étonne le plus, c'est que tout est symbolique, et qu'on a de suite un sentiment indéfinissable de ces créations symboliques, marque véritable d'une intelligence peut-être divine en effet." Orphée VI, 15.

(39)Orphée VI, 19.

(40)Orphée VI, 20.

(41)"Ainsi l'homme ne parvient à sa dernière mort que par une suite de trepas successifs; et cette dernière mort n'est à son tour que le passage à une autre vie." Orphée VI, 21.

(42)Orphée VI, 49.

(43)"Mon fils, dans la langue sacrée, initiation veut dire mort." Orphée VI, 50.

(44)"comme enfant, lorsqu'il devient jeune homme; comme jeune homme, lorsqu'il devient homme fait; comme vieillard, lorsqu'il entre dans la décrépitude." Orphée VI, 21.

(45)"L'état social n'est point un état de repos; c'est plus souvent un état d'orage et de grande souffrance." Orphée IV, 261.

(46)Orphée VI, 22.

(47)"Ainsi donc ceux qui sont entrés dans la route continuent d'y marcher lorsqu'ils ont déposé leur vêtement terrestre; et les destinées humaines toujours finissent de s'achever dans une autre vie." Orphée V, 332.

(48)"Son âme se détacha doucement de son enveloppe mortelle." Orphée V, 331-2.

(49)"L'Egypte est une représentation du ciel." Orphée VI, 53.

(50)Orphée VII, 59.

(iv) Mythology and Christianity

(51)Orphée V, 303.

(52)"Par la pensée humaine Dieu est dispersé dans ses attributs, parceque la pensée humaine est condamnée à être successive." P.S., 112.

(53)P.S., 113.

(54)ibid.

(55)"l'idée fondamentale de la perfectibilité successive de l'âme humaine." ibid.

(56)Orphée IV, 257.

(57)ibid.

(58)ibid.

(59)Orphée II, 157-8.

(60)Orphée VII, 99.

(61)"Cette essence, avant d'être la substance humaine, doit-elle s'élaborer, se perfectionner, subir des transformations successives, jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit arrivée à l'état où elle est mûre pour la manifestation humaine, c'est-à-dire pour la manifestation première de l'intelligence? Auparavant l'intelligence était-elle, mais obscure? En quittant la forme humaine, continue-t-elle une évolution sans fin?" Orphée VIII, 162.

(62)"il faut que l'intelligence mérite. Voilà ce qui rend impossible que tout finisse avec cette vie; voilà ce qui rend impossible aussi que, sitôt après cette vie, il ne se trouve pas un autre état de liberté." P.S., 131.

(63)Orphée VIII, 162.

(64)Orphée VIII, 163.

(65)"Mais nos conceptions, toutes gigantesques qu'elles te paraissent, sont loin d'avoir le caractère d'illimité et d'infini qui est empreint dans toutes les conceptions de l'Inde...Dans les royaumes de l'Inde, rien ne commence, rien ne finit, rien n'est." Orphée VIII, 171.

(66)"l'esprit de l'homme n'est qu'une goutte d'eau perdue au sein d'un abyme immense et sans bornes." ibid.

(67)"Le grand symbole de l'unité infini avait besoin d'une expression aussi grande que lui." Orphée VIII, 172.

(68)Orphée VIII, 163.

(69)"de grandes figures fantastiques, sans durée et sans forme, (qui) habitaient seules ces déserts d'ombres et de feux." Orphée IX, 218.

(70)Orphée VIII, 120.

(71)Orphée VIII, 156.

(72)"Comment dire en effet la volonté humaine devenue une puissance de ce monde, et pervertie à l'instant même où elle se manifeste pour la première fois?" Orphée VII, 108.

(73)Orphée VII, 108.

(74)Orphée VII, 109.

(75)"Ses forces ne peuvent lui servir qu'autant qu'il les emploie sans cesse, sans repos." Orphée VII, 110.

(76)"Il vit l'homme appelé à vaincre constamment les lois de la nécessité, à se perfectionner malgré le destin." Orphée VII, 109.

(77)Orphée VII, 111.

(78)Orphée VII, 88.

(79)ibid.

(80)Orphée VII, 84.

(81)"La chenille est un emblème que Dieu nous a envoyé." Orphée VII, 89.

(82)Orphée VII, 89-90.

(83)Orphée VII, 90.

(84)"sache que l'âme est immortelle; et tout sera expliqué" Orphée VII, 91.

(85)"Oui, répondait Job; mais sans entrer dans tous les secrets de la justice éternelle, nous en savons assez pour croire à des purifications mesurées selon le besoin des

âmes." Orphée VII, 92.

(86)Orphée VII, 94.

(87)Orphée VII, 95.

(88)"Les éléments sortaient du chaos avec leurs lois primitives et leurs propriétés, et ces lois gouvernent les atomes et les sphères célestes; et les sphères célestes agissent les unes sur les autres comme les atomes s'attirent et se repoussent." Orphée VIII, 165.

(89)"je sentais intuitivement qu'il était un acte continu, éternel." *ibid.*

(90)"Et je connus les grandes harmonies du monde, les harmonies entre les éléments, les corps célestes." Orphée VIII, 167.

(91)Orphée VII, 97.

(92)Orphée VII, 107-8.

(93)"Evandre, je vous fais passer par toutes mes anxiétés; car il faut bien que vous participiez au trouble de l'épreuve qui m'était infligée." Orphée VII, 99.

(94)"l'esprit toujours offusqué par les lueurs douteuses d'une doctrine trop contenue ou trop insuffisante." Orphée VII, 106.

(95)Orphée VII, 105.

(96)Epilogue, 262.

(97)*ibid.*

(98)"Ceux qui sont nés dans le christianisme et qui ne se sont pas assimilés sa pure doctrine ne seront-ils pas condamnés à rétrograder vers l'état antérieur au christianisme?" Epilogue, 280.

(99)"Il est tenu surtout d'adorer les traces du christianisme antérieur, qui a fait le monde ancien, la lumière du christianisme réalisé, qui fait les destinées du monde nouveau de l'humanité." *ibid.*

(100)Epilogue, 265.

(101)"Le christianisme a rétabli l'unité de l'espèce humaine." Epilogue, 277.

(102)Epilogue, 268.

(103)"C'est bien le moment de répéter que, sous certains rapports, le christianisme a été l'initiation devenue

générale et populaire." P.S., 115.

(104)"Le christianisme est la grande expression de ces lois, pour tous les mondes où l'homme doit pénétrer." P.S., 132.

(105)"c'est que la Genèse n'est pas seulement une cosmogonie, elle est aussi l'histoire primitive du genre humain." P.S., 45-6.

(106)Orphée VII, 106.

(107)ibid.

(108)"La vie actuelle porte le fardeau d'un anathème inconnu, et cet anathème est la grande énigme que nous cherchons en vain à résoudre." Orphée VIII, 129.

(109)ibid.

(110)"Ainsi le monde aurait commencé par l'anathème! Il finirait par l'anathème!" Orphée VIII, 156.

(111)"une naissance apparente et une mort également apparente, cette vie n'est dans la réalité qu'une portion de notre existence, une manifestation de l'homme dans le temps." Orphée VIII, 152.

(112)"Il prendra dans cette vie nouvelle son point de départ du point même où il sera arrivé, s'il a su mettre à profit les épreuves." Orphée VIII, 153.

(113)"C'est que, par une loi de l'esprit humain, à chaque époque, l'homme veut reconquérir tout son passé, pour se l'assimiler de nouveau." Orphée VI, 6.

(114)Orphée II, 130.

(115)Orphée VIII, 166.

(116)Orphée VIII, 167.

(117)Orphée VIII, 169.

(118)"la vérité ne s'enseigne pas; elle illumine celui qui en est digne." Orphée VI, 24. "La vérité n'est pas une chose étrangère et hors de nous." Orphée VI, 28.

#### (v) Orpheus and mythology

(119)"Je ne pouvais considérer le mythe grec que d'une manière tout à fait générale, mais il m'était permis de chercher à pénétrer dans les profondeurs du mythe latin. Toutefois celui-là même, je n'ai pas voulu le peindre, mais

le faire sentir." Première addition, 6.

(120)"L'Orphée est toute palingénésie primitive." P.S., 287.

(121)P.S., 98.

(122)"nous sommes encore très peu avancés dans l'investigation des faits primitifs; que nous en sommes réduits, le plus souvent, à conjecturer et à deviner, qu'un jour nouveau ne tardera pas de se lever sur l'immense horizon des origines." P.S., 84.

(123)P.S., 85.

(124)P.S., 86.

(125)P.S., 87.

(126)"L'époque où l'on place généralement l'apparition d'Orphée est un peu antérieure à la guerre de Troie, événement qui est considéré en général comme la limite des temps fabuleux et des temps historiques." P.S., 89.

(127)"cette disposition des peuples à localiser, chacun chez lui, les mythes étrangers, et à se les approprier par la transmutation des noms, des lieux et des temps, ont fait un brillant chaos qui se refuse à la lumière philosophique de notre temps." P.S., 90.

(128)P.S., 91.

(129)ibid.

(130)P.S., 92.

(131)"Une des significations du nom d'Orphée pourrait présenter le sens d'arrangement, de disposition, et désigner celui qui arrange, qui dispose, ou qui unit, qui joint." P.S., 96.

(132)"l'Orphée est l'histoire condensée de quinze siècles du genre humain: une telle synthèse laisse intact l'ordre de travaux consacrés à l'analyse scientifique." Première addition, 13.

(133)Première addition, 13.

(134)"J'ai fait Orphée diphys: il est très exact de dire qu'en effet les patriciens et les plébéiens étaient considérés comme appartenant à deux natures différentes." Première addition, 31.

(135)Première addition, 32.

(136)Thamyris in mythology signifies bard, beauty (male),

blindness (homosexuality), lyre and song. Appollodorus, Pausanias and Homer sketch him as a celebrated musician and minstrel of Thrace, who challenged the Muses to a musical contest, was defeated and blinded, his beautiful voice and harmonious lyre destroyed. Other versions of the myth state that he was in love with the youth Hyacinthus, and that Apollo, also in love with the beautiful youth, told the Muses (untruthfully) that Thamyras claimed to be a better singer than they, whereupon he was blinded.

(137)"Orphée est venu donner la capacité du bien et du mal."  
Orphée I, 105.

(138)"Ma destinée est dans mon nom qui signifie voix harmonieuse" Orphée IV, 281.

(139)Orphée I, 95.

(140)"roi pasteur, vous le dernier des rois de cet âge du monde." Orphée I, 98.

(141)Orphée I, 101.

(142)"Ensemble ils affrontèrent les mystères terribles du Capitole...Ensemble ils étudièrent les phénomènes de la foudre, signe sublime, un et varié, qui est aussi toute une langue...Ensemble ils lurent dans les anciens rituels les présages tirés du vol des oiseaux, et ils surent ainsi que ces présages étaient fournis et dirigés par l'âme des ancêtres opès." Orphée I, 87-8.

(143)"Ce qu'il y a de manifeste, c'est le développement, l'évolution." P.S., 130.



### CHAPTER 3: LANGUAGE

#### (i) Language and mythology

Ballanche says that there exists a close link between the development of mythology and the development of language. Both are explanatory of the Creation. As man's expressive powers become defined, so does his history.

"L'institution du langage et l'invention des faits primitifs sont des choses complètement analogues."(1)

When language was instituted, primitive facts were invented to explain what had happened in the past. To some extent the description of primitive history was, therefore, right from the start an invention. This is in agreement with Ballanche's view that invention or intuition is necessary for any comprehension of the past.

The history of language, or philology, is the best and most appropriate instrument to sound the depths of antiquity, according to Ballanche.

"L'histoire des mots serait toute une histoire des choses."(2)

He states clearly that here he follows Vico and Bacon.(3) It should be appreciated that the rediscovery of history as a discipline in France was a nineteenth century development, closely linked to the renewed interest in Vico. Historical philology also dated only from the latter part of the nineteenth century, although some interest in it had been displayed during the Renaissance and notably by Lorenzo Valla, in the Elegantiae linguae latinae (1444).

Thereafter historical philology was applied by Erasmus in the Annotationes on the New Testament (1505), later to philosophical and legal texts, and eventually to narrative as a record of the past. Ballanche is not writing in a tradition of philology, on the contrary, his historical conception thereof is advanced for his age.

He says that when man could decipher the history of language,

much would be revealed to him concerning the history of the human race. God gave man the ability to investigate his history, when He gave him the power of language.

"Dieu a tout fait en donnant le langage à l'homme: c'est la grande et universelle révélation du genre humain."

(4)

Language is the essential creation, because by giving names to objects, we create them for ourselves.

"La prérogative de nommer est donc en quelque sorte une participation à la création. (5)

Man is seen as an active, dynamic force, gifted with the power of creation, which he already exerts in a lesser manner, through the utterance of his thoughts, put in words. If only God gave matter and movement to man's thought, it would be realised in visual and substantial terms:

"L'homme crée par la pensée; si Dieu lui donnait de la matière et du mouvement, l'homme réaliserait cette pensée." (6)

The capability of material creation resides in man, but for the moment, his power is restricted to naming things. By giving names to objects, man creates them too. Man's function is to know and to name:

"pour l'homme être réellement c'est se connaître." (7)

Once he knows himself, or rather his own essence, he can create material things, by naming them:

"je donnai un nom à toutes choses, et ce nom était l'essence de chaque chose." (8)

Ballanche's is not a nominalist attitude, which holds universals to be non-existent apart from the names given them. To him, names are expressive of entities, be they exclusively intellectual. Names belong to the human language. Once one starts employing names on a symbolic level, one is communicating in the divine language. Names, and the transmutation thereof in different cultures, act to familiarise man with the created universe. Therefore man localises names, in an act of originality, which demonstrates the inherent vitality of language.

"cette disposition des peuples à localiser, chacun chez lui, les mythes étrangers, et à se les approprier par la transmutation des noms, des lieux et des temps, ont fait un brillant chaos qui se refuse à la lumière philosophique de notre temps." (9)

Ballanche recognises this feature of linguistics, unlike the philosophers of his day. The word gives identity to things that would otherwise just remain an anonymous mass. It bridges the gap between essence and substance.

Ballanche is adamant that man could not have invented the substantive, but that it grew out of social traditions. If an individual had to create names, it would take centuries before they became generalised and accepted universally. When man abused his power to name objects, the name did not remain, because it had to come spontaneously. Ballanche is critical of formalism, because he believes that form distorts idea. He speaks of the "yoke" of form:

"La substance d'abord n'eut point de forme. Dieu dit, et elle subit le joug de la forme." (10)

As an idealist and not a materialist, he prefers to operate in the realm of the intellect, platonically, but he refutes the return to immaterialism advocated by the Indian mystical religions. The preoccupation with words as entities was due to Ballanche's understanding of the value of hieroglyphics in language. The recent decipherment of the Rosetta Stone placed renewed emphasis on the sacred aspect of hieroglyphics, the language of the gods. This view was prominent in the Renaissance, a notable exponent thereof being the sixteenth century Lyonnais writer Champier, whose theory of language emphasised the symbolic nature of hieroglyphics. Greek was held to be a degeneration of the original language spoken by the Egyptians, and containing mysteries.

Ballanche's interpretation of hieroglyphics is influenced by the eighteenth century conception thereof, as described in Diderot's Encyclopédie. Hieroglyphics were defined as writing in painting ("écriture en peinture"), the first method of

depicting ideas through figures. The Egyptian priests were not regarded as the inventors of hieroglyphics in order to hide the profound secrets of their science from the common people. Hieroglyphics were held to be born out of pure necessity for usage in civil matters, such as laws, regulations and historic recordings, which appeared on obelisks and columns and on temple walls. In this function hieroglyphics provided a link with posterity, says the Encyclopédie. It explains that the hieroglyphic method has two modi operandi: (i) to use one part for the whole - pars pro toto, and (ii) to substitute one thing for another with similar qualities. The first method gave rise to "l'hiéroglyphe curiologique", the second to "l'hiéroglyphe tropique". An example is the respective representation of the moon by a semi-circle or by a baboon - the latter method produced symbolic hieroglyphics which became more and more difficult to comprehend, developing from a mysterious compilation of different things to an unintelligible enigma. The result was that the public knew less and less about the significance of hieroglyphics, especially as the art of phonetic writing was invented. Hieroglyphics became a painful study, carefully cultivated by the priests exclusively, and eventually came to be regarded as being sacred. The priests attributed a divine nature to hieroglyphics, in order to make them even more worthy of respect, which created a relative devotion to these symbolic figures, abounding in direct adoration, such as the cult of the animal. Ballanche's conception of hieroglyphics is also indebted to Warburton, whose Essai sur les hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens, où l'on voit l'origine et le progrès du langage et de l'écriture, l'antiquité des sciences en l'Égypte et l'origine du culte des animaux, was translated into French by Marc-Antoine Léonard de Malpeines. The text included "des observations sur l'antiquité des hiéroglyphes scientifiques et des remarques sur la chronologie et sur la première écriture des Chinois" and was published in Paris in 1744.\*

\* By H.-L. Guérin, 2 vol. in-12, pl. gr.

When Ballanche says that creation is of a hieroglyphic nature, he means that elements like the wind and the tides are a summary of organisation from chaos. Likewise, hieroglyphic characters organise man's thoughts, making sense of what was otherwise merely chaos or mindless action. Hieroglyphics was one realm in which man could create names, because of the symbolic nature thereof. Firstly, there are letter characters, which are sacred and their initial meaning unknown. They may be hieroglyphic in their revelatory powers, but we use them to denote definite sounds. These letters are gifted with such an energy, that they produce words and languages "douées elles-mêmes d'un pouvoir de création." (11) Words often have intrinsic energy. The word therefore has a very important role to play in the development of man and his culture. Man is born with the gift of the word. (12) He has always thought, and thought engenders expression. Ballanche is full of praise for the word, which he describes as an "intellectual sound", and which brings the light of comprehension to man. (13)

Ballanche's view of the function of the word in the cultural or social structure is original in his time. Words, to him, are a part of society, and are consequently part of a process of cultural development. Words are seen as living entities, and language is seen as creation, dynamic not static. This is a modern approach to the function of language, and shows that a culture is alive. In the eighteenth century, each concept had to be expressed by one word. Ballanche assumed a radically different viewpoint by saying that it was beneficial that there were several names for one concept, even if all the names were not always valid, because they attested to progress and development. He saw that a proper history needed a vital language and a sound philology, that a proper sociology needed sound psycho-linguistics, and that a proper social psychology needed a sound dialectology. His notion that cultural progress goes hand in hand with the development and growth of language, is very modern indeed.

In addition to the function of the word vis à vis social and cultural changes, Ballanche also praises the word for its function as creator of individual awareness. He honours the word because it is thought made communicable:

"Honneur à la parole qui n'est que la pensée devenue sensible à celui qui la forme, et à ceux en qui il veut la créer, lien mystérieux des intelligences humaines. (14)

Man's identity comes from the word. It is the human "me" awakening in the presence of the outside world.(15) Not only external objects are created when they are being spoken of. The process works vice versa. Man is created in terms of his surroundings. He is positioned as a superior being. Influenced by Vico, Ballanche states that man creates a world of thoughts, but that only God has the power to realise his thoughts in material terms.

The supreme function of the word is nevertheless social. The word is creative thought, and as such, it unites men, because it operates in the mind. Men are linked through their intellects, as apart from animals, and the expression thereof in verbal terms. Through language, man's spirit can speak to another spirit, and an intellectual communication can thus be established. When the word of God becomes transformed into the word of man (16), a higher level of communication, a symbolic means of sharing one's experiences, is attained. Language is revelatory of human nature. Because of language, man's intelligence is made known. This separates him from the animal species. There are, however, different kinds of intellect, and these are rendered by different forms of language, giving an idea of the successive alterations "que subit la tradition en se transmettant." (17) Language is an on-going activity, and as such it is a historical link in time, within a particular social or cultural context. It is a visual example of palingenesis. Seeing as language is situated historically, it is subject to succession, which engenders change. Nevertheless, all different languages express the same human intellect, they are merely the

clothing of what is situated within. (18) Language is like a cloth that dresses man's thoughts and give them an external appearance. There may be a multitude of different clothes and fabrics, but they all veil the same substance, namely intelligence. Language links all mankind, be it different nations at the same time, or the same nation at different epochs. It establishes a rapport between a variety of different-thinking minds, and also links the living to the dead. In this latter function, it is a palingenetic vehicle par excellence.

Language marks the division of man in two groups, says Ballanche, according to Homer. The language man speaks can be inarticulate or barbaric, which merely means that it is unknown to us and may even be sacred. There is nothing derogatory about Ballanche's use of the word barbaric, by it, he means primitive, or beyond historic recollection. (19) The alternative is an articulate or comprehensive language. The passing from the former to the latter stage marks a palingenetic development, and establishes a rapport between the finite and the infinite. Language is continual revelation but there are times when a new age is marked by a new phenomenon: so, too, when language was first introduced as a cultural institution and commenced a tradition, a new palingenetic cycle.

Language was instrumental in the formation of the myth or the fable, which became the expressive agent of the cyclical changes in the ancient world. An example is the Biblical tales that have come down to man. Although simple, they are revelatory, and opened a new world of understanding (20). These tales may as well have been myths, because they were all created when language experienced its initial growth and development. All cosmogonies started with a tale of revolution; physical revolution that was analogous to revolution of the intellect, in other words, social palingenesis stemmed from intellectual palingenesis, expressed via language.

Ballanche's linguistic approach to culture states that the latter is often made up of words, which are prone to misreadings, delusions, illusions, but also act vice versa: words are required for creation, for cultural betterment, because of their differentiating devices. He gives an example, using name-giving as the instrument that engenders social progress. He says the Eternal Providence was scattered all over the world, so that a thousand names which described the gods, were in fact all descriptive of one great Being. All of human dignity rested on the principle that there was one unique essence, of which the identity would remain a secret to man.

"Pendant un temps les attributs de la Divinité, séparés par la pensée humaine, infirme, deviendront eux-mêmes des divinités que les mortels adoreront. Les attributs de Dieu seront des dieux, les noms des dieux seront encore des numèns." (21)

Because man would not be able to sound the mysteries of the One, he divided it into various aspects of characteristics and gave names to each, to clarify them for himself. The different names concerned different characteristics of one Creator. Each god had his own numen and was himself a numen. The power lies in the name, which is a symbol for the character. This is the basic precept on which the mystical Jewish Kabbalistic religion is founded.

"chaque dieu avait son numèn, et était lui-même un numèn: ceci tient à une idée sur laquelle repose la cabale." (22)

Ficino (1433-99) had said in the Theologia Platonica (1482) that polytheism was harmless, because the various gods were all aspects of the one Jove. Ronsard had said that the tradition of having several names for one God was a method to understand the secrets of existence through a variety of guises/names/fables. In the Abbrégé de l'Art Poétique François (1565), he mentioned this allegorical expression of names:

"les Muses, Apollon, Mercure, Pallas, Venus, et autres telles deitez, ne nous representent autre chose que les



puissances de Dieu, auquel les premiers hommes avaient donné plusieurs noms pour les divers effectz de son incompréhensible majesté." (23)

But while Ronsard saw this as a veiling tradition, Ballanche saw it as a progressive aspect of culture, showing man's developing and regenerated intellect. Ballanche believes in the art of memory, through name-giving, as an Orphic/hermetic instrument to cultivate not only the intellect, but also the palingenesis of tradition.

Ballanche's originality resides in his observation that long before writing, man's communication of his cultural legacy was mental and oral. He praises the oral tradition as a system of ensuring a universal uninterrupted past, because the submission of tales concerning human history to the memory preserves the past more spontaneously than writing could. Like Leibniz, he is concerned with the art of Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses, who are essential to the conception Ballanche has of the past. The system of memory that Ballanche upholds is not that of rhetoric as in Greek oratory, but a belief that mental images allow a grasp of reality. Leibniz had said that Mnemonica provided the matter of an argument and Methodologia gave it form. The former joined the image of sensible thing to the thing to be remembered. Through memory of natural images ("nota"), which may even be geometric or pictorial, a sensation may be transmitted to future generations. The emphasis should fall on the creative use of the imagination/intuition, said Ballanche, for memory was an intellectual activity that brought man in direct communication with the cosmic past. Ballanche's attitude is partly neo-Platonic, common in the Renaissance, that memory was associated with the divine, for it endowed man with the power to grasp the highest reality through a magically activated imagination. Ballanche holds memory to be a power of the soul, a symbol of the secrets of the world, like Egyptian hieroglyphics are memory images. While memory is not an occult art to Ballanche, it is a means of coming closer to the cultural changes inherent in human

history.

His view of an elliptical past which has made progress not by going forward but by regenerating and repeating itself, is nurtured by his notion of an evolving art of memory.

Ballanche says that man has somewhere, in the slow digestion of his past, lost certain parts of it, and changed certain aspects of it. These are all nevertheless intact in a universal knowledge which man attains to. Ballanche's faith in the myth foreshadows the nineteenth century preoccupation with language studies, pointing in particular towards Nietzsche (1844-1900). Fifty years after Ballanche, Nietzsche also attempted to explain history as a return of the same, slightly changed and improved every time. To him there were no stages as there were for Ballanche, but a tension between two poles that would be resolved in Also sprach

Zarathustra. Nietzsche chose Zarathustra, the Persian philosopher, as the incarnation or mouthpiece of his theory, because he was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the essential wheel in the working of things. Zarathustra embodies the fundamental idea of Nietzsche's work, the eternal recurrence of all things, like Orpheus does to Ballanche. Nietzsche's is a vital philosophy, not unlike Ballanche's, that held metaphor to be the chemistry of language, and a superman to be the outcome of the spiral return of European culture.

Although Ballanche displays an esoteric obsession with the past as an uninterrupted phenomenon, his theory of communication does not penetrate the link between the outside and the inside world. Ballanche is content to employ Egypt as the embracing element of dream and reality, as the country of enigmas and mysteries. He foreshadows Nerval, who would use the Orient in Voyage en Orient to reunite myth and mystery, real and spiritual. Ballanche never gives an exposé of the Oriental traditions or religions, yet his love of ancient myths leads him to create an intuitive legendary esoterism and to make use liberally of Egyptian symbolism. An example

is the tale of the phoenix, which illustrates the perpetuity of cultural legacy.

The tale of the phoenix has been conserved in the ancient traditions of Isis' temple. One of the Egyptian priests, who concerned themselves with the initiation of the poet Thamyris, tells this tale, which dates from the first age, the cosmogonic reign of the Titans. Uranus calls his sons together and tells them that the day is near for the phoenix to erect his own tomb and to be reborn at the same moment that he is consumed by flames. There is no break in the action, no interim period, because the phoenix changes from one state to the next in a simultaneous action.

"L'époque de la mort et de la résurrection du phénix était arrivée." (23)<sub>a</sub>

When one life or age comes to an end, the next one is born from its immortal ashes. The phoenix is an allegory of the death of man, who is immortal, and is born from his own decease. It is also a symbol of the death of society, and its subsequent rebirth.

Ballanche's interpretation of the symbolism of the phoenix is based on the Egyptian legend, and not on the Greek version, a misunderstanding which dates from Herodotus. The Greeks turned the phoenix into a fairy-tale bird that carries the body of its parent from Arabia to Egypt and places it in the temple of the sun, where it is seen once every five hundred years. To the Egyptians, the phoenix embodies the original declaration of destiny, the Word that mediates between the divine mind and created things. The bird is an aspect of God, it is the first manifestation of the soul of God. When the phoenix gave out the primeval cry, it initiated the recurrent cycles of which time is composed. It is the patron of all division of time, and the temple of the phoenix at Heliopolis became the centre of calendrical regulation. The phoenix is in addition the messenger from the Isle of Fire, the distant, magical place of light beyond the limits of the world, where the gods were born and revived. It brought the message of

light and life from eternity to the microcosm.

In Ballanche's oeuvre, the phoenix is the poetic image for society, subjected to a series of revolutions. The bird is the symbol of people in successive stages or ages: savage, nomadic, hunter, pastoral, labourer, trader. Each of these states requires different and successive laws, derived from general laws applied to all time and to everyone. (23)<sup>b</sup> These states or ages of man have never come to an end. Once a stationary period has been reached, it is time for renewal. The phoenix knows instinctively when he has reached the time to die and when it is time for renewal. He constructs his own funeral pyre, "Parcequ'il veut trouver dans les éléments intimes d'un principe devenu stationnaire le germe d'un nouveau principe progressif." (23)<sup>c</sup> The phoenix knows that the progressive principle will supercede the stationary principle. In order to regenerate life, he makes his own death as glorious as possible. Ballanche treats the myth as poetry, as metaphoric language. To Ballanche, this symbolic voluntary death or self-sacrifice goes hand in hand with an experience of the senses. The funeral pyre is made of sweet-smelling wood (23)<sup>d</sup>, because the bird wants to surround himself with perfumes (23)<sup>e</sup>. He waits for sunrays to descend on the mysterious pyre to set it alight and illuminate it. Ballanche uses the word "embraser", which has the dual meaning of setting aflame and of giving light. From the flames of the death, a source of light is born simultaneously to illuminate man. Ballanche says:

"Toutefois je ne pouvais être parvenu à cette lumière intellectuelle qu'après avoir connu celle qui colore tout sur la terre et dans les airs." (23)<sup>f</sup>

Illumination of the intellect follows upon wisdom of the senses.

The Egyptian priests say to Thamyris that an epoch of ending and of renewal of the human societies is at hand. The reign of divine kings was to be replaced by reigns of heroic kings or pastoral kings, according to place. A new era of humanity

was heralded. (23)g The mystical death of the phoenix, the symbolic bird, was soon to start all over the world. Only those princes who had some understanding of successive destiny could hope to see its glorious resurrection, the image Ballanche uses for the new age. For the resurrection to be accomplished, there is one more prerequisite. Man should be patient and wait for its occurrence. Destiny cannot be forced and will not be revealed to those for whom it is not permitted.

"Malheur aux hommes trop curieux, ou trop impatients de l'avenir, qui violeront l'entrée du bocage sacré."

(23)h

An august and religious silence is required so that a pure sunray can consume the pyre and the life of the palingenetic bird, making his death a fertile event. If these requirements are not met with, an ordinary fire will burn out the sterile ashes of the bird's remains. (23)i

Ballanche's viewpoint is positive. In addition to communicating linguistically, man has the ability to establish a rapport with the animal kingdom and with those spirits of a higher realm. He can speak to all of creation, because of his instinct, which illuminates him, but also renders phenomena even more mysterious. (23)j Because instinct has the dual function of revelation and mystification, it can mislead man in his comprehension of the universal riddle, and make him susceptible to distortion of science. Ballanche says that the science of the astral influences has been distorted by those who do not understand it, and has consequently produced a thousand superstitions. A special preparation of the mind is required before it should be allowed to deal in instinctual terms, and if this wisdom is absent, the result is superstition. (23)k There is definitely a message to be gleaned from the appearance of animals in relation to the stars, says Ballanche. This message can be read in the hieroglyphic astral signs, the animal signs of the zodiac, but the message is cryptic. Man may think that he understands how the cosmos falls into place, but meanwhile be concerned

merely with superstition. Animal instincts are an outline of man's intelligence and feelings. The instincts are merely a stage in the development of man's spirit, before he acquired intelligence. The different ages of his development, childhood, maturity and old age, are resumed instinctively in the final moment, that of death, as presented by the phoenix. (23)<sup>l</sup> This explains why Ballanche does not shun instinct, but values the role it can play in man's communication with the rest of creation and his initiation into cosmic wisdom. The initiated man speaks with one voice, like Orpheus, that is understood not only by men, but also by animals. (23)<sup>m</sup> The voice echoes from generation to generation and resounds through the ages. This voice may be the symbol of man's mind having established a rapport with superior intellects:

"Son esprit embrasse l'univers." (23)<sup>n</sup>

By combining myth and tradition, the phoenix allows man to fly higher and further than the earthly realms.

(ii) History of language: development from an archetype

Linked to Ballanche's concept of one archetypal Golden Age and one original nation from which all history derived cyclically, is his judgement that there must have been one primal tongue. This original language had the internal energy to create new words and due to its dynamic nature, it developed in different filiations through palingenesis. There was one original intellectual generation - in the Beginning was the Word - of which the generation of beings and forms is an imperfect image. Ballanche places emphasis on the phenomenon of an original unity or archetype, the scattering of which inspired all attempts to explain the universe. If man could ever succeed in reconstructing the unity, he would be able to explain the cosmos. Reconstruction, for Ballanche, signifies progress, it does not eradicate it. To put the lost unity together again would be the ultimate step in man's cultural development, even though it would not engender any innovation or novelty. For man a reconstructed universe would be new, because he has never yet experienced it in its entirety. It would not merely imply the putting together of the known and the unknown, but its recreation in terms of original or primitive unity would be the ultimate achievement for modern man.

Closely linked to the recreation of unity, is the notion that language, an important instrument in our attempt to do so, also developed from an archetype. In the eighteenth century, Leibniz tried to construct a comprehensive system of linguistic genealogy in his Miscellanea Berolinensia (1710), the notes he compiled while lecturing in Berlin. He assumed that most of the languages in Europe, Asia and Egypt descended from the same original language. Leibniz's grouping did not rest on scientific analysis, but on intuition. His study opened a more comprehensive view of the kinship between languages and the commencement of a thorough collection of texts. Ballanche stated that although all languages were one in the beginning, in time, each nation came to speak its own

language and the national identity was bound to the language. Ballanche takes an example from the Bible, saying that the descendants of Noah divided the earth, and so formed separate strands of civilisation. (24) Each one of these strands was, however, a filiation of the original. Ballanche does not provide scientific justification for his theory of the development of languages from an archetype, but, like Leibniz, he uses mainly intuition. As his language theory is a related doctrine to that of palingenesis, Ballanche discusses it extensively in the Essai sur les Institutions Sociales (written in 1818, first published in 1833). He does not follow the positivist attitude of Comte or Saint-Simon, but adopts a more Romantic approach to the evolution of civilisation and its traditions, and the development of etymology, philology and linguistics.

"Nous écarterons de cet examen toutes les doctrines qui tendent plus ou moins au matérialisme; et que Locke et Condillac seront eux-mêmes mis hors de cause." (25)

During the eighteenth century, the matter of "origin" was given much thought. The origin of religions, of the human intellect and of archaic epics as witness of primitive thought and religion, was subject to extensive discussion. The collection of texts made sources more available and allowed for more speculation about language. Rousseau considered the matter of language in Essai sur l'Origine des Langues (1750) and so did Diderot, in his correspondance with Grimm, whose magazine Correspondance littéraire was distributed in the European courts. The German scholar Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) laid the foundation for a historico-comparative treatment of the Germanic languages, in his Deutsche Grammatik (1819). When Freidrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) came to study Sanskrit in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, which had the best selection of ancient Indian manuscripts, and consequently published Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier (1808), a lively interest in Indian culture was kindled, and for the first time the expression "comparative grammar" was used. However, among the



French writers, no real theoretical progress concerning the development of grammar or linguistics was made and there was not yet a dominant historic attitude, although there were numerous theories and many reasoned reconstructions of the origins of languages, all of which were founded on cartesian rationalism.

One theory proposed that language was at its purest during the genesis period, and that ever after, it had been subject to corruption and diminished intensity. Ballanche, who is a firm believer in the Aristotelian precept that there exists a definite relation between language and thought, and that language is there to express ideas, agrees that language has definite developmental aspects. His thesis is that man was created with language or grammar, because he could never have invented it himself, but that he constantly adds to the wealth of his language by finding new words and phrases for new things. Language is therefore palingenetic.

In his theory of philology, Ballanche follows Vico, who said that language was an active force, subject to individual creation. Vico's Scienza nuova was essentially a theory of the origin of language, and in it, three stages of linguistics are defined. The first language was divine or mythological, Vico says, and also hieroglyphic or sacred. It was the language of the gods, characterised by its essentially mental aspect. Men had not yet learnt the use of the word. This primitive language was mute, although it was written down. Gestures and objects were also used to indicate what was meant. The language from the age of the gods contained divine "characters", which had allegoric or symbolic value, for example, Juno meant marriage, Jupiter signified auspices. The second language belonged to the heroes. It was a poetic language and was also mute. Symbolic signs, like heroic emblems, were employed, often to describe military and mythological life. Allegories dealt with characters like Achilles, which signified force, or Ulysses, meaning prudence. The heroic or poetic language could also be

written down, records of which are called cryptography. The third language belonged to the plebeians or masses. It was epistolary and served practical relations. The characters were vulgar and phoenician. Vico said that all three languages appeared simultaneously. The first was almost wholly mute, with only slight articulation, the second was a mixture of being mute and articulate, and the third was almost totally articulate. This is an ideal presentation of the development of language and stems from Aristotelian ideas, that Vico inherited from St Thomas.

Ballanche also proposes an ideal form of linguistics, but gives it a platonic basis regarding the creation of grammar. He says that the creation of the word is an act of divine will, and not a miracle. (26) The word as an entity has no history, nor development. Man was born with the word and with certain organisational features of language. Only once it had been created, could language start its palingenesis.

"le langage seul ne peut pas être successif dans la combinaison de ses éléments primordiaux." (27)

Once started on their philological path, languages can be observed to have perfected themselves through the addition of new words and phrases, but in their basic construction, they remain the same.

"Elles ne changent point sous le rapport de leurs éléments constitutifs, c'est-à-dire sous le rapport de ce qu'elles ont de commun entre elles, et qui est le fondement de la grammaire idéale." (28)

It is therefore feasible to describe the history of language, but first it should be accepted that there was one archetypal grammar, which is still in use.

Ever since the laws of language were invented, man's mind was not left with much to create. Once this task had been completed, very little invention was required, almost for time eternal.

"Car certainement les langues étant faites, tous les travaux qu'elle peut accomplir sont bien faibles en comparaison de celui-là." (29)

In trying to establish who the inventors of language were, Ballanche does not give too much credit to the first, or primitive, men. He believes that the inventors of language were the inventors of human intelligence. As such, the word has a history that is more distant than historical time. The word came directly from God. At first, it was not only the symbol or sign of the idea, it was the idea itself. There was thus no need to write language down, because it already had a fixed aspect. There were no written laws and the oral tradition reigned exclusively. The written word implies decay, he says, unlike thought, which is constantly recreated and therefore active and progressive. Ballanche seems to be convinced that the old or primitive languages, such as the Indian, had many properties that our derived languages have lost. He acknowledges that the science of etymology was still very recent, but hopes that further studies of Oriental languages would become widespread. He justifies his own theory by pointing out the lack of evidence and says that for the moment, one had to rely on personal reasoning. (30)

He contradicts the theory of Adam Smith, the economist, who wrote a treatise on the formation of languages. Smith said that the derivation of languages implied a simplification and therefore they could perfect themselves. Ballanche takes the opposite viewpoint, saying that such simplification engenders a loss of poetry in a language, even though philosophically and metaphysically, there were certain gains to be had by abstraction. (31) Ballanche was convinced that language tended to become more complex, because it was vital and symbolic, and thus prone to progress and development.

Ballanche's justification for the existence of an archetype, is that all men have the same intellect. Man is also a great imitator, and when the initial derivation of languages commenced, he merely copied the existing model. Consequently, languages were all moulded on the same pattern. (32) Once man had found the formula, he did not subject it to alteration.

With the appearance of the written word, there was a gradual change. Initially, the written word served only to describe old traditions, but soon there were two very different kinds of language or means of expression: poetry, that spoke of the traditional word, and prose, that was merely the expression of the written word. Eventually, poetry would merge completely into prose, which had established itself through writing. According to Ballanche, a new era started in his time, an age in which the traditional word had no place. Everything had to be written down. The letter, eminently fixed, would replace the mind, essentially free. Ballanche's is a twentieth century view that language is a confinement, that it imprisons man's thinking ability.

When Ballanche speaks of writing, he is concerned with the syllabic letter. He takes care to distinguish it from hieroglyphics, which did allow human thought all its primitive energy and elasticity. (33) Ballanche believes hieroglyphics to be symbolic writing, not phonetic signs. Hieroglyphics, to Ballanche, are like to the metaphor, and contain a certain amount of verbal magic. There was an energy in words which allied them with our vital existence. Ballanche's notion of the intrinsic power of words stems from his interpretation of hieroglyphics as explained in Diderot's Encyclopédie. He says that the written word was the first materialisation of thought, first to give it a fixed aspect, and that writing engenders the establishment of secret doctrines. Seeing that the traditional word was so cherished that it was not meant to undergo any changes, it was not revealed to the profane, but remained reserved to those in authoritative positions, or those who had been initiated. When ideas expanded, they started to be written down, especially by men of science, who were the final arbiters of the written word. They would judge whether particular writings should be accepted or rejected. This was especially appropriate in Egypt, where all approved writings seemed to have been inspired by Hermes, and every other writing was condemned. Hermes was apparently the one accepted tradition.

Much later still, the written word was allowed to explain the traditional word, and so canonic and apocryphal books were created. Lately, each nation had its own system of what to allow and what not to allow, and Ballanche wrote against such random censure. One could not be sure what would and what would not be allowed, because censure was left to civil powers, and one could not be sure that the traditions would be preserved in their entirety.

The writing down of language created other problems too. Ballanche proposes a theory that written and spoken languages appeal respectively to our senses of hearing and seeing. The two can be very distinct, but can also be confused. In any case, they complement each other. (34) Primitive language, as it was given to man by God Himself, was composed of onomatopoeiac words as well as synonyms with no sound imitations. Because of its innate energy, the language used both these expressive forms, the noun and the verb, to create modifications. This was how separate languages came into existence: certain languages concentrated more on onomatopoeia, while others rather created words with inflections. Nevertheless, all languages retained a certain number of primitive traditions which established a filiation among them. This was a spontaneous occurrence. (35) Any new additions to languages were, however, attempts to perfect the particular language.

The development of writing is closely allied to sound and sign. Philology should not neglect the invention of writing, which Ballanche believes to have started with the ancient Egyptians' "cordonnets" and the Peruvians' "quipos". (36) Sign is a prerequisite for writing, but often there is no syllabic sign for a sound, and signs or symbols are therefore external and conventional and not intrinsic and essential.

"Il est certain que la langue écrite n'est que par convention, et non point essentiellement, la peinture de la langue parlée." (37)

Ballanche opposes the viewpoint held by Condillac, who wrote on the necessity of arbitrary signs, in the Essai sur les origines des connaissances humaines (1746). This stance could be refuted by the belief that man does not need signs at all to enrich his languages, because he can do it mentally and vocally. Signs are an appendix to, but not a prerequisite for the development of language. (38) Signs, symbolically used, are nevertheless important in that they offer a means of superior communication. The symbol is not fettered by material concerns like the word has to be. Ballanche upholds the view that the symbol is therefore the means of communicating directly between souls/intellects, without reason coming inbetween to hamper the spontaneous flow of thought.

"Par la voie du symbole le poète essaie de communiquer aux hommes ce que le langage ordinaire est impropre à exprimer." (39)

Symbol as pure intellect or thought is indestructible, says Ballanche, unlike form, which can perish. Thus when any particular analogy is established to form a plastic or physical symbol, it can be destroyed, because it will not retain the same meaning throughout the ages. Only pure symbol will subsist. Ballanche foreshadows the symbolism of Mallarmé, later in the nineteenth century. Mallarmé saw a symbol in everything and wished to communicate on a symbolic level only. His approach is purely metaphysical and takes Ballanche's theory of symbolic language as divine revelation one step further. Ballanche restricts his usage of the symbol to his theory of pure ideas. Mallarmé applies the symbol to his poetry. To Ballanche, the purest of symbols are hieroglyphics, which is the language of the gods, as can be seen for example in the display of animal signs in the celestial zodiac. The gods thus take care not to reveal their identity too directly.

"Considère ainsi nos hiéroglyphes; ils sont des peintures du nom de Dieu, ou des attributs du nom de Dieu. Le nom ineffable ne se prononce point." (40)

Again Ballanche expresses his opinion that names are vital,

that culture is a process, not a static brooding on a single reality. Only the name of the sign or symbol that represents the god or his attributes can be named. The language of the gods is also that of dreams, which can act as revelations to man.

"La langue des dieux est celle des songes envoyés par Jupiter...ou plutôt celle des symboles." (41)

Symbols fit perfectly into a mythological scheme, because they belong to the realm of invention or inspiration, where reason has little place. The myth operates through symbols, and the use thereof can enable us to decipher certain missing links in history. What we do not know, is not lost, because the symbols are there. They should merely be placed in the appropriate context. By concentrating on symbols of language in an attempt to unravel the secrets of the past, we would therefore have to study the development of language and try to ascertain how these symbols came about originally. The history of language, or philology, is significant to Ballanche, because there is an analogy between our incapacity to place the historic cycles end to end in order to explain the past, and our inability to explain all symbols. Certain symbols are manifest of an older tradition, a cosmogonic language, such as the one in which the Orphic texts were written. This sacred language explains the creation of the universe. Because the human race is subject to progress, the symbols regarding cosmic facts revealed to it would also develop and become more extensive and complex. The symbol thus becomes an important element in the analysis of our past and of the original creation, and also a gauge of our development. The symbol revealed to him, the present symbol, would not be the same symbol of primitive times, "les condescendances divines devant changer selon les progrès du genre humain." (42) Ballanche has symbolically extended the ancient past to the infinite future. Unlike the Zoroastrians, who gave the body of time a definite beginning and a definite ending, Ballanche adhered to the concept of a specific beginning in time, but he did not foresee a definite ending.

He envisages the future as fluid, imbued with mystery as unsoundable as the past. Time is a living entity, subject to palingenesis as any other living being. The expression of time in each age is symbolic: it is a variation of the original harmony, perfection and order. Ballanche liberally merges the classic ideal of perfection, as expressed in man's origin, with the modern ideal of mystery, as expressed in the ages subsequent to creation.

Mercury-Trismegistus, the Greek version of the Egyptian god Thoth, whose name means Thrice Greatest and who was the god or prophet whom men turned to for divinely revealed wisdom, held a special fascination for the illuminist philosophers. Hermes/Thoth was believed to be the inventor of writing, which enhanced his affinities with Orpheus and the Horapollonian hieroglyphic cult. No Greek had an understanding of hieroglyphics in antiquity, which is clear from their precept that hieroglyphics were symbolic signs or allegories. The Egyptian-born philosopher Plotinus interpreted hieroglyphics from the viewpoint of esoteric philosophy and this belief subsisted until the nineteenth century. Ballanche still adheres to the false hypothesis of Horapollo, the fifth century Greek/Egyptian who wrote the Hieroglyphica, interpreting hieroglyphics as symbols and not as phonetic signs, which was the prevailing view during the Renaissance, when artists got hold of the Horapollonian manuscript. Ballanche, following the Encyclopédie on hieroglyphics, interprets hieroglyphics as symbols laden with wisdom, a viewpoint much in vogue at the time. He uses pagan poetry, Oriental myths and modern sources like Champollion as authorities in his writings. The Orphée is an excellent glossary of ancient traditions. Ballanche uses all of these authorities as symbols, of creation, of existence, of time, of rebirth. He says that the symbol is given to man by the great Creator. By attributing intelligence and imagination to man, the Creator allows him to give names to objects from the material world. These names are often residual in the



object, and often they are arbitrary creations of the imagination, as when man creates words for abstract concepts. Names are hieroglyphics of the material world, in that they give concrete expression to phenomena. While Ballanche is convinced that the revelation of names is an act of a higher level of consciousness, names nevertheless belong to the human language, while symbols belong to the divine language. The bridge between the two is hieroglyphics, which have more physical attributes than symbols, but less so than words.

The study of the history of names and words, etymology, fascinates Ballanche. He criticises several of the viewpoints on etymology that were current in his day. In France, they were topics of discussion, but not of serious study between 1800 and 1850. In the rest of Europe, studies were abundant about the relationships between languages, leading to the establishment of comparative linguistics. He makes mention of August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845), who remarked that the matter of linguistic origin should be treated historically and not speculatively, and was the first scholar to introduce the real study of Sanskrit philology on the Continent. The first to start a comparative linguistic analysis was Franz Bopp (1791-1867), in the work Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem griechischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache (1876). Ballanche says that there was no material available for historic investigation, but that men all over the world were occupied with the assembly thereof. Etymology had already proved that there were several families of languages. (43) Ballanche is clearly au fait with J.J.Rousseau's Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes (1755) and the Discours sur les sciences et les arts (1750), in which he states that the problem of etymology cannot be solved. Rousseau then composes his essay on the origin of languages, which Ballanche esteems for its point of departure, namely that there exists a distinction between domestic or familial languages, and the languages of nations. He contradicts Rousseau, though, in saying that it is a fallacy that man

lived in a natural state before a social state came into existence. The one important statement made by Rousseau, is the one he quotes:

"La parole paraît avoir été fort nécessaire pour établir l'usage de la parole." (44)

Commentary is made about the Essai de Physiologie of Charles Bonnet. He examined what the state of man might have been before he had the word. Ballanche speaks out against such an absurd supposition, which clouds Bonnet's otherwise valuable research. In the Contemplation de la Nature Bonnet does concede, however, that one had to speak in order to think. (45) A propos M de Bonald's Dissertation sur la pensée de l'homme et sur son expression, Ballanche feels that some valuable statements were made concerning the primitive gift of the word. De Bonald's hypothesis is that man cannot speak his thought without thinking his word. Man can only decompose the sounds of a written language, which is already decomposed from the original spoken language. Thus it is physically and morally impossible that man could have invented either the art of speaking or of writing. Ballanche is not ready to accept that written and spoken language are subject to the same difficulties, or even part of the same problem. He says they would have been if man had invented language or writing, but as it was, this was invalid and De Bonald should rather have followed Rousseau.

Fabre d'Olivet aimed to prove that the word was born from the power of the sign, and that writing thus preceded the spoken language. Ballanche admits that there may be some truth in that claim, especially regarding Oriental languages, but he lacks the knowledge to refute or approve of this statement. The theory of Fabre d'Olivet leads to another system that Ballanche wants to mention. At first, men communicated through interjections, cries, onomatopoeia, hand signs and facial expression. There was no element of language which could be perfected. However, certain men of genius, like Prometheus, who stole the fire from the sky, and Orpheus, who

tamed the animals in the forests, founded a religious society. This was the origin of the Mysteries. Human intelligence was created by such ingenious men, whose names have perished. Only myths of certain others' feats remained as a symbol among men. From these men, sacred languages were born, even though man could originally not understand anything of these languages. The Indian gymnosophists and the Egyptian hierophants worked in the secret sanctuaries to perfect the rudiments of language.

"Sans doute il faut accorder d'immenses facultés à de tels hommes, il faut leur accorder même quelque chose de la prévision." (46)

The existence of such wise men implies the prior existence of religious orders, founded by mythological characters. Ballanche does not want to speculate about the founding of these orders, and says that certain phenomena would always remain hidden.

What he finds particularly interesting in the research undertaken by Fabre d'Olivet, is that originally the languages of northern Europe had only two simple tenses: the present and the past. The languages of occidental Asia, originally possibly from Africa, had no present tense, only the past and future tenses. Hebrew was one such example. To Ballanche this signifies a conception of fluidity in time and of continuity of existence. (47) The feeling of continual existence has completely disappeared from our languages. This is one of the changes that language underwent in its development. Nevertheless, languages remain palingenetic in their revelatory character.

"J'oserai donc à présent dire avec plus de confiance que la parole est une révélation qui n'a jamais quitté le genre humain et qui ne le quittera jamais." (48)

Ballanche's comments on the theories of the French authors of his day and age, were not central to the linguistic question in the rest of Europe, where it assumed a comparativist aspect. In 1814, the Dane, Rasmus Rask (1787-1832), pointed

out that language was an object of nature, and that the knowledge of language resembled natural history. In his article "On the Age and Authenticity of the Zend language and of Zendavesta" (1826), Rask referred to Sir William Jones's article in 1771 that Sanskrit, Greek and Latin had a strong affinity, expressing doubt about the relationship among these languages. He refuted those conclusions and assigned to the Avesta language coördinancy with Sanskrit, adding that it was the language of Zoroaster's teachings. Bopp, father of comparative linguistics, who methodically pointed out the relationships among languages in the Indo-European family, also placed linguistics in the domain of natural sciences, together with founding comparative grammar for the knowledgeable European public. The study of language generally came to be seen as the study of civilisation. The new keyword in the study of linguistics was to become "organism" instead of "structure" or "system". Ballanche is therefore way ahead of his French contemporaries in seeing language as a living, growing and developing tradition. He believes that although man's cultural antecedents and intellectual heritage were buried in historical antiquity, they could be discovered through linguistics. Due to France's cultural tradition of cartesian rationalism, Ballanche's contemporaries displayed much resistance to the study of comparative grammar. There was still a strong belief in a general universal grammar. Silvestre de Sacy, professor at the Collège de France and one of the "Idéologues", wrote that the general principals and the definitions common to all languages are founded on the nature of things, which was common to the operations of our mind. Ballanche therefore did not find himself in the midst of the nineteenth century linguistic controversy, but was rather a pioneer in France. His thoughts on the history of language and on an archetypal language, which subsequently developed into different families, were highly original in a milieu that concerned itself only with reasoned reconstructions about the origin of language. Ballanche takes the speculation one step further through his particular interest in the origin of the word, in

the analogy it displayed with the origin of society.

"l'origine de la parole et l'origine de la société sont absolument la même question." (49)

Ballanche endows language study with a social application and links it with cultural changes. His views on the creative as apart from the comparative feature of language apply to society, and the analogous development of both.

The first age manifested the absolute empire of the imagination. The age of Christianity showed up man's moral emancipation and the third age, the present era, focussed on the emancipation of thought. There was a gradual change in the liberation of the thought from its links with the word, suddenly come to the fore. (50) Ballanche divides men into two groups, according to their view of the creation of the word. Firstly, there are those who believe only in their own creative mind, who believe that there was a time without words. They can conceive of existence independent of the word. They are the neophiles and have overtaken the archeophiles, the second group, who acknowledge a superior creative mind and do not believe that the word could have been created by man. This group believes that the word must have been passed on through a mysterious tradition. Ballanche adopts the middle road when he says that he agrees fully with neither viewpoint. He says the first group does nothing to enlighten society. They have only disdain for the marvellous and want to explain all through reason. They thought that the sole employ of the word was to teach man reason. Ballanche agrees that the advent of the word engendered great change in the human intelligence. It was a development that penetrated man's thought. This is, however, not the only function of the word; its task was still incomplete. The word would still find "un asile dans les sentiments religieux." (51) The first group have finished with the word and banished it from the intellectual world, by indulging in abstraction. Man thinks more liberally and is more liable to philosophical reflection than before, but Ballanche warns that the philosophers' domain is rich only due to the ideas brought to it by the

word. He refutes extreme rationalism which justifies social liberty to the extent of the usurpation of political power. He speaks to his own troubled age and in particular to Spinoza when he says "le discrédit de la parole traditionnelle a dû amener le discrédit des doctrines mystérieuses et sacrées." (52) Spinoza, in his Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (1670), had subjected Biblical writings to the same critical examination as profane texts in the name of Reason, and had concluded that all religions were merely transitory and periodical, Christianity being no more than a historical phenomenon linked to a particular epoch.

Ballanche admits that the group of neophiles attacking the traditional character of language are the vanquishers and that is why he would address his reconciliatory words mainly to them. As far as language is considered the sign of our thoughts, it should not be believed that man had the ability to create it originally. Man was born with the word, because the word is a social phenomenon.

"mais chaque individu a été doué d'un sens intellectuel, que j'appellerai le sens social: c'est la parole." (53)

Man has never existed out of society, thus he has never existed without the word. Originally, the word and thought existed simultaneously, at the time when things were first established. Ballanche, opposing Spinoza, concedes that there is something to be said for the group of archeophiles who believe in certain traditions being passed down to man from the darkest past.

"il ne faut pas méconnaître l'esprit de ces traditions, qui ne doit point cesser de nous régir." (54)

Tradition is important to Ballanche, who can never reinforce enough that all history and religion stem from primitive tradition and all language stems from primitive oral tradition.

(iii) Poetry as an expression of myth

Poetry, says Ballanche, serves as a tool to communicate, it expresses the meaning of the world. Poetry allows man, the microcosm, to commune with the great universe, the macrocosm, because it operates symbolically. The microcosm is an image of the macrocosm, an old Kabbalistic view, which Ballanche applies to create an analogy between not only man and the universe, but also man and the Creator, and the universe and the Creator. He says that there is a likeness between the ideal and the plastic universe, and between the spheres of the human and celestial faculties. An essential aspect of poetry is that it allows symbolic interpretation. Man, as a symbol, and the universe, as a symbol, can be brought closer to the Creator through poetry, for which three elements are required: history, myth, and arrangement. He follows Strabo in this requirement (55) and praises Virgil for his poetic powers which made him the compiler of ancient history. Poetry is not always expressed in the language of man, for it has a long aforegoing tradition, dating from other eras.

Ballanche establishes a linear progression in the development of poetry. First comes cosmogonic poetry, which was lost with the Mysteries. The debris of cosmogonic poetry is represented by lyric poetry, which in turn was followed by epic poetry. (56) Primitive epic poetry is revelatory of the past: it brings closer to us, "par une sorte de mirage merveilleux, les faits entassés sur les dernières limites de notre horizon." (57) This process is characteristic of all cosmogonic poems. Creating visions or mirages of the past, has become the traditional way of pushing back the frontiers of history. The epic has to do mainly with heroes who bring us in touch with an age prior to that of man: the heroic age of great fictional characters who nevertheless constitute some truth, because they may have been created as a result of the brave deeds of an actual, living hero, or merely as a creation of the human mind. (58) Poetry is not mere fiction,

it does present a just and vivid image of truth, because only truth would survive throughout the ages, says Ballanche. Poets later become historians, who recount happenings "tels qu'ils se passent, un à un, dans leur réalisation matérielle." (59) Poetry is therefore the anterior form of history. Because there exists such a close link between poetry and mythology, the latter is also a forerunner of historic writing. Somewhere in the future, there would be one man, whose character was in a developmental stage between God and nature, and he would seize the whole domain of poetry. He would thus link the divine and natural kingdoms. Endowed with a rich and vast imagination, he would be able to describe successively domestic and warlike habits, and those of travelling man. His creation would constitute the epic and drama. The epic and historic muses exchange and confound their attributes in such a manner that the depths of the human horizon are brought closer to man. Before the epic poet came into existence, there would still be an interim period in which the oral tradition reigned supreme. Lyric and epic poetry are linked by bardic poetry, which is expressive of both song and narration, and is comprised of the oral tradition. Ballanche suggests a return to this tradition, because it is an embodiment of faith in eternity. This is proved by men's belief not to write these songs or narrations down, but to pass them on orally from generation to generation. The art of memory illustrates an implicit belief in rebirth or palingenesis.

The poet acts on a higher sphere than the historian. He proclaims knowledge of the hidden causes of things, of profound origins, and of events in their whole, as ordinary man would not be able to conceive of them. A poet is thus the living expression of God, of things, of men. (60) He has a sacred role to fulfil, and he is a sacred figure himself. The Romantics believed that the cult of poetry would allow them to sound the secrets of the past, and that inevitably the future would become clearer to them as well. Ballanche has shown that he was partial to this belief before many of



the Romantics expressed it, by saying that the poet's domain extends over the past, because it is man's primitive history, in his rapports with God, with superior intellects and with his own kind, (61) but it also covers the present and the future, in time and beyond time. Poetry is the primitive word, revealed to man, but it is also a summary of all the human generations.

In addition, poetry is a record of the age in which man lives, because of its operational means. Ballanche mentions two kinds of original compositions: one is an imitation of nature (which means that man's present surroundings acts as a source of inspiration and remains as a document of world perception at the time long after he has gone) and the other is an imitation of ancient sources (this inspiration comes from outside the poet). History and legend or myth are equally significant in the poet's creative process. Historic facts are interpreted and transfigured by the creative imagination of the poet. Ballanche should be seen as inaugurating a series of writers like Maurice de Guérin and Victor Hugo, whose La Légende des Siècles was a cyclical work with a visionary depiction of humanity as successive and simultaneous. Hugo says the same as Ballanche did a decade or more before him: Fiction, perhaps, but not falsification, is history gleaned at the portals of legend.

Both Ballanche and later Hugo wanted to let mythology relive, to give our existence a feeling of mystery, miracle and myth. Ballanche says that man could come to an understanding of the universe through various means:

"L'un est éclairé par les lumières d'une haute raison;  
l'autre est instruit par un tact exquis du sentiment."

(62)

Ballanche recreated the marvellous, as for example in his account of Orpheus' initiation by the Egyptian priests. Hugo followed with the same approach, giving free reign to the inspirational muse that would lead him on an ascending path toward illumination. Ballanche is not a poet in the literary

sense of the word, but, like Hugo would do, he created his own poetry by means of myths, according to his personal view of the world.

Ballanche entertains the illuminist/hermetic idea that he has been divinely inspired, like a Dante or a Virgil, to whom he compares himself. Like Dante, he wishes to visit places inhabited only by the intellect:

"Ainsi que Dante, je veux visiter les lieux infréquentés de la foule, les lieux qu'habitent les intelligences, où est le berceau mystérieux de toutes les destinées humaines." (63)

He does not think that he is inferior to one of the greatest poets of antiquity. More than Virgil, he had the feeling for divine matters. His inspiration would approximate primitive inspiration. As if to excuse his blasé attitude, Ballanche asks the rhetorical question: who would believe in him if he did not. He says that he resembled the initiators of Mysteries and founders of ancient philosophies. Like them, his role does not include the material rendition of a doctrine. His true book would not be written. It would result from each reader's general impression:

"En cela je ressemble aux initiateurs des Mystères et aux fondateurs d'écoles philosophiques et anciennes. Eux non plus n'écrivaient point, ils disaient." (64)

Unbeknown to him, Ballanche's attitude shows affinities with the ancient Egyptian initiatory doctrines, which were nowhere recorded as a dogma, but were open to interpretation. Texts about ancient Egyptian religion are predominantly cultic. This can be illustrated by the manner in which the Osiris myth is handed down: nowhere do the texts present a connected tale. Apparently there was no authoritative myth, for the living consciousness of religion and myth resided in men. \* The essence of their religion was not to be found in one myth or one doctrine. In a similar vein, Ballanche says that each

\* see "Initiation in Ancient Egypt" in C.J.Bleeker (ed.), Initiation, E.J. Brill, Leyden, 1965, pp49-58.

reader has to contribute his own volition to ensure his personal comprehension of the universal mysteries, just like he has to contribute his own labours to his personal perfectibility.

The spectacle of the material world meant nothing to those who had not yet penetrated into the world of ideas. They would remain preoccupied with the basest of phenomena, says Ballanche. Plato was aware of this and Ballanche firmly believes in the Platonic attitude towards phenomena. (65) Ballanche's view of himself as a kind of initiated Orpheus was taken up by his contemporaries. He was seen to bring civilisation and initiation to humanity, like the mythological character. He wonders whether he will be granted the title of Prophet in his own time:

"S'il fut donné au Dante de se rendre l'expression puissante de son temps, qui me donnera d'être l'expression du mien?" (66)

The poet can transmit the particular traits in every object that he alone remarks, without having to paint it or spell it out. Poetry is an impression, and not an imperfect painting. (67) Imitation is the least successful way of getting closer to the ancient, Ballanche says, because from a mere copy no feeling of the time could result. (68)

Poetry transports us into an ideal world, in which man's liberty, or his intelligence, has no bounds. In this region there is still a purity which has not become decadent from contact with our world. As such, poetry inhabits a sacred environment, and it is a most revelatory expression. Ballanche has a strongly developed sense of the metaphysical and gives life to everything in the universe, imbuing it with the same kind of animism for which Hugo is famous. Ballanche can envisage the cosmos in all its vastness, in its chaos following the Creation, in its original harmony. He is a visionary poet, like Hugo, and a visionary historian, like Michelet, who stands for the generation of historians between the Enlightenment and the purely scientific era. Labelled

Romantic and amateurish, these poets and historians nevertheless gave an original and humanistic view of history.

Poetry is clearly a revelatory enterprise, because it makes use of the symbol in a synthesis of the epic and historic muses. Poetry does not merely operate successively on a linear level, as does historiography, but acts multi-dimensionally, because of its link to superior intellects. A general trend of the times in the nineteenth century was the curiosity about the universe and it came to be expressed in the oeuvre of Ballanche through the image of the bard, complemented with a lyre, the Orphic symbol of both traditional and initiatory knowledge. The bard thus rules over two disciplines: that of conventional history and that of esoteric initiation. In the Celtic tradition, the priests played the lyre, with an inspired talent. The bard could therefore link two worlds, bringing together the gods and human societies, because he could speak to both, via the nine strings on his lyre. Of the nine strings, which are analogous to the nine muses, two are reserved for the wisdom of the initiated, and cannot be strummed by those who have not been illuminated. To illustrate, Ballanche incorporates in his myth the tale of Érigone, the lovelorn bacchante, who attempts to play Orpheus' lyre and subsequently dies. The lyre is a civilising force (69) and not only links men among each other, but also links men and the gods. The seven primitive strings are for men who recognise the power of the immortal gods, and the other two are additions to provide man with the laws of society. All the strings should be consonant (70), so that social laws could be in harmony with celestial spheres. The former is a mere reflection of the latter.

All ancient laws, those of Egypt, Crete, Athens and Rome, says Ballanche, were composed in verse to illustrate their superior nature. Ballanche points out that the Scandinavians considered verse to be magic, because of its revelatory nature. (71) Ballanche does not discuss the possible magic properties of verse, but he is adamant that poetry is not

attached to the material world, following Saint-Martin. The poet's task is one of dematerialisation, for he deals with impressions only. Ballanche foresees a poetry that would be concerned with thought and feeling exclusively. It could even become prose, such as would happen in the prose poetry of Guérin. Condemning versification, he would rather see a return to narrative, the oral tradition, than have rhymes devoid of symbol. The notion of the expressive power of prose was further developed by Guérin, a contemporary of Ballanche's whose output is in the vein of the English Lake poets of the German Romantics like Novalis. Guérin was a marginal Romantic, on the doorstep of Symbolism, like Ballanche, and provides a bridge between Ballanche and Hugo. To Ballanche, Orpheus is the symbol of predetermined harmony, to Guérin, the symbol is Bacchus. Both authors adhere to a Dionysiac conception of cultural and social changes and development, and Guérin was influenced by Ballanche in his admiration for the antique fable as a source for modern emotions. Guérin's famous prose poem, "Le Centaure", portrays a primitive age peopled by centaurs, gods and mortals, who inhabit the forests, deserts and mountain tops of the world, and charm the gods with their labours. As a reward, man was given the lyre to appease him and grains to sow, but not the secret wisdom of existence. Unlike the centaurs, half-gods condemned to immortality with no change in their situation, man ages, eventually to be incorporated in a cloud on a high mountain top, in the rivers that flow in the bosom of the earth. Man's changing destiny is approached calmly and resignedly, in contrast with the centaur whose perpetuity does not seem progressive, like man's. Guérin's subtle statement on progress builds on Ballanche's precept that it can only be effected when man becomes socialised.

Unlike the budding sociologists, Ballanche never neglects the role of the individual in forming social traditions. By concentrating on the visionary powers of the poet, the individual prophet or seer, which to the Romantics is the Self, Ballanche emphasises the universal, humanity,

collective consciousness and even cosmic consciousness. He attains this social application of the duty of the poet through rational thought. His is an intellectual process, not directly intuitive like most of the Romantic poets. Ballanche is a mystic poet, but he deliberates every aspect of his theory. He acquires his theory of poetry slowly and patiently, unlike the immediate mysticism of a Boehme or a Swedenborg. Poetry is one mode of sounding universal mysteries, but reason and science are equally valid. Ballanche is nevertheless convinced that intuition was the surest way of attaining certitude, therefore the eighteenth century rationalism held less appeal for him than did the nineteenth century Romantic approach. The poet's task, Ballanche believed, was to establish the laws of Providence on earth, laws in the social, political and religious domains. Like the ancient Egyptians, he believed that natural laws about cosmic cycles could be understood through a comprehension of the successive self, which is expressed by changing cultural traditions, both among one race in its paligenetic pattern, and among several races combined in one age.

NOTES: CHAPTER 3

(i) Language and mythology

(1) Epilogue; 274.

(2) Première addition, 42.

(3) "Vico ne s'y était pas trompé. Il avait bien compris que la philologie était le meilleur instrument pour sonder les profondeurs de l'antiquité. Bacon l'avait également compris." Première addition, 20.

(4) Orphée VI, 25.

(5) P.S., 125.

(6) Orphée VIII, 164.

(7) Orphée VIII, 165.

(8) Orphée VIII, 166.

(9) P.S., 90.

(10) Orphée VIII, 145.

(11) Orphée VII, 81.

(12) "L'homme est né avec la parole, car il a toujours pensé, et il a toujours communiqué sa pensée." Orphée VIII, 154.

(13) "J'entendis alors un son, mais un son intellectuel, et ce son me parut être la parole de la lumière." Orphée II, 169.

(14) Orphée VII, 68.

(15) I.S., 421.

(16) "la parole de Dieu, lorsqu'elle se transforme en la parole de l'homme, doit se rendre accessible à nos sens, à nos facultés, s'incarner en nous, devenir nous-mêmes." Orphée VII, 82.

(17) Orphée VIII, 147.

(18) "les langues sont toutes l'onduleuse draperie qui dénonce la même intelligence." Orphée VII, 112.

(19) "remonter aux Barbares n'était autre chose que chercher au-delà du mythe." Première addition, 28.

(20) "Il me semblait que j'eusse vu le monde sortant du chaos, l'homme, lorsque sa demeure a été toute préparée, prenant possession de l'air, de la lumière, des météores, des éléments, des plantes, des animaux, et nommant les lieux, les êtres, les choses." Orphée VII, 95.

(21)Orphée V, 320-1.

(22)Orphée I, 71.

(23)Ronsard, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Vaganay, Paris, 1923-4, IV, 471.

(23)a - (23)n — See page 180.

(ii) History of language: development from an archetype

(24)"'Ils se partagèrent entre eux les îles des nations, s'établissant en divers pays, où chacun eut sa langue, ses familles et son peuple particulier'...Ces mots, dis-je, indiquent, à mon avis, non seulement la division des langues et des races, mais aussi l'identité de chaque race avec chaque langue, renseignement cosmogonique de la plus haute importance." Première addition, 50-51.

(25)I.S., 182.

(26)"Ne voudrait-il pas mieux se reposer dans la croyance d'un premier acte de la volonté divine?. I.S., 256.

(27)I.S., 241.

(28)idem. "Il n'y a pas de différence entre elles pour leur organisation essentielle, pour leur structure grammaticale." I.S., 243.

(29)I.S., 246.

(30)"Quant à présent nous sommes obligés de nous en tenir au raisonnement." I.S., 233.

(31)"Il est même permis d'affirmer que les langues, au lieu de s'être perfectionnées, se sont dégradées en succédant les unes aux autres." I.S., 242.

(32)"toutes les langues sont moulées les unes sur les autres." I.S., 244.

(33)"l'écriture hieroglyphique, qui sans doute eut une énergie propre, mais cela me paraît au moins très douteux pour l'écriture syllabique." I.S., 232.

(34)"elles ont fourni l'une et l'autre des tropes différents qui se sont mêlés dans la langue écrite et dans la langue parlée, et qui les ont enrichies toutes les deux." I.S., 252.

(35)"si ce partage s'est fait ainsi, c'est sans calcul et par une suite de dégradations ou de perfectionnements que nous



ignorons." I.S., 251.

(36)I.S., 253.

(37)I.S., 248.

(38)"Condillac a fait un roman sur la formation du langage: il en tire cette conclusion vraiment inconcevable, la nécessité de signes arbitraires." I.S., 261.

(39)Orphée VII, 82.

(40)Orphée VII, 112-3.

(41)Orphée VII, 114.

(42)P.S., 7.

(43)"Déjà la science des étymologies commence à n'être plus une science aussi conjecturale." I.S., 257.

(44)I.S., 267.

(45)"car pour penser il faut parler." I.S., 263.

(46)I.S., 270.

(47)"C'était le sentiment de la continuité d'existence, qui allait du passé au futur, et qui alors embrassait le présent." I.S., 275.

(48)I.S., 276.

(49)I.S., 196.

(50)"L'âge actuel serait, dans le système que je me propose de développer, l'âge d'une seconde émancipation, celle de la pensée par l'affranchissement des liens de la parole." I.S., 181.

(51)I.S., 199.

(52)I.S., 191-2.

(53)I.S., 224.

(54)I.S., 200.

### (iii) Poetry as an expression of myth

(55)"Quoi qu'il en soit, Strabon exigeait pour la poésie trois éléments, l'histoire, le mythe et l'arrangement." Première addition, 7-8.

(56)"Il est évident que la poésie épique a succédé à la poésie cosmogonique, perpétuée dans les Mystères, et perdue avec eux." Orphée IV, 237.

(57)Orphée II, 125.

(58)"Les fictions de la poésie ne sont pas de vains mensonges; elles sont vraies, en cela qu'elles sont fondées sur les plus nobles facultés de l'homme." Orphée I, 112-3.

(59)Orphée VII, 111.

(60)"Le poète est l'expression vivante de Dieu." Orphée VII, 111.

(61)"La poésie est la parole primitive, révélée à l'homme. Elle est l'histoire de l'homme, ... dans le passé, dans le présent, dans l'avenir, dans le temps et hors du temps." I.S., 312.

(62)Orphée VI, 26.

(63)P.S., 5.

(64)P.S., 21.

(65)"C'est pourquoi le spectacle du monde réalisé ne dit rien à ceux qui n'ont pas pénétré dans le monde des idées: Platon le savait bien." P.S., 6.

(66)P.S., 7.

(67)"Le poète transmet l'impression sans peindre l'objet." I.S., 313.

(68)"Le sentiment moral, le sentiment religieux, le sentiment de l'infini: telle est l'impression générale qui doit résulter de toute poésie." I.S., 314.

(69)"Quoi qu'il en soit, cette lyre fut mon seule héritage, et c'est la lyre qui civilise les hommes." Orphée II, 146.

(70)"Les sept cordes primitives de la lyre sont pour les hymnes de la reconnaissance envers les dieux immortels; deux cordes ajoutées sont pour les lois des sociétés humaines, lois qui doivent être consonnantes aux accords des sphères célestes." Orphée II, 145.

(71)"Les Scandinaves attachaient aux vers une puissance magique." Première addition, 40.

(23)a.Orphée VII, 73.

(23)b."Tous ces états différents et successifs demandent des lois différentes et successives, émanées des lois générales qui s'appliquent à tous." Orphée VII, 78.

(23)c.Orphée VII, 78.

(23)d."C'est lui qui rassemble le cinnamome, le safran, les autres plantes odoriférantes qui doivent l'entourer de parfums." Orphée VII, 78.

(23)e."Il attend que les rayons de soleil descendent sur ce bûcher mystérieux pour l'embraser." Orphée VII, 78.

(23)f.Orphée IX, 221.

(23)g."Le monde de l'humanité par-tout commence." Orphée VII, 79.

(23)h.Orphée VII, 79.

(23)i."Au lieu d'être consumé par un rayon pur du soleil, son bûcher sans parfums est embrasé par un feu tout matériel; et des cendres stériles sont tout ce qui reste du phénix." Orphée VII, 80.

(23)j."On peut considérer, il est vrai, l'instinct des animaux comme une sorte de voile qui enveloppe toute la création, et qui rend plus mystérieux encore les profonds mystères des facultés humaines." Orphée VII, 77.

(23)k."La science de l'influence des astres, défigurée par les hommes qui ne l'ont pas comprise, a produit mille superstitions." Orphée VII, 77.

(23)l."Le grand-prêtre nous a présenté l'homme dans son enfance, dans son âge mûr, dans sa vieillesse; et le phénix nous le présentera aujourd'hui dans sa mort." Orphée VII, 75.

(23)m."Et cette voix est entendue non seulement par ses semblables, mais encore par les animaux." Orphée VII, 75.

(23)n.Orphée VII, 76.

CONCLUSION: Palingenesis: a Positive doctrine

Ballanche's vision of the future is extremely positive. Once man has accomplished his destiny in general, each intelligent and moral individual has a different destiny to accomplish. Eventually all individuals will end up "par être heureuses et bonnes" (1). A kind of osmosis takes place between the social destiny of mankind and that of individual man:

"travailler à son propre avancement, c'est travailler à l'avancement du genre humain tout entier." (2)

While the human race perfects itself, it also perfects individuals. Society plays a paramount role in man's perfection, because it exposes him to others towards whom he should act charitably. Children and old people especially nurture the feeling of responsibility and care that we have toward our fellow human being. (3)

Man will not be lost in anonymous space when he lives forever after, but will fulfil his individuality, a key-note throughout Ballanche's theory. Just as this world is filled with a diversity of people, the Hereafter comprises various beings. (4) While man is subjected to the powers of the elements in this life, in the Hereafter the roles would be reversed, so that man would exert influence over the elements. Once man was regenerated, he would personally see to the regeneration of the earth. (5) Immortality becomes a necessity to man when his intellectual faculties are perfected, because he realizes that his moral being also has to be perfected. Ballanche interprets immortality not so much as a Christian concept, but as the perduration of cultural and social legacies. To translate his thought to an individual level, Ballanche uses a Christian vocabulary when he talks of the afterlife of the soul and the perfectibility of man, to signify a philosophical theory of palingenesis. With a higher intellect at his disposal, man becomes aware that moral perfection (read: cosmic wisdom) cannot be achieved on earth, thus he starts to long for another life after this one, in which he would have another chance to

perfect his soul (read: to discover the secrets of his existence). In this manner, "les progrès de l'intelligence aident au progrès moral." (6) He thus places the intellect in the supreme position to ensure progress. Ballanche is optimistic in his belief in man's ability and capability to comprehend the mysteries of the universe.

The fact that man can hope to attain a better life, that there is continual regeneration of one particular being, makes life on earth a bearable preparation for the principle of immortal life. Thus the history of man and the history of society are analogous, both of them having to die first in order to be reborn in a better state. (7)

Life to come is an absolute necessity, be it to perfect individual man, or to perfect collective man in his sympathies with those like him. That would be the start of a new palingenetic age, when all people would become one people. Men of all classes would form one class only, says Ballanche, in an attempt to hurry along on the path of Him who is the grace of all. Joining a sociological viewpoint to a religious one, Ballanche believes that there is a great equalising force working to assimilate all men, until they are reunited in the original unity. Even nature, the animals and the plants would be subject to this vast palingenesis. (8) Every link in the chain of organisation was implicated, from the "pierre brute jusqu'à la plus haute intelligence." (9)

The conception of time as a slow, biological development, is important in Ballanche's theory of cultural changes, because the contemplation of his past and his future sets man apart from the rest of creation. The phenomenon of his having a history implies a future development, which would also be continual and palingenetic. Man has not changed since the original moment of his creation, when he was first perceived to appear from beyond the boundaries of myth. Prior to man's

appearance on earth, prior even to mythology, there was a period of dogmatic mystery. Since man appeared, he has had the faculty of free thought, so that even if he could not change the world, he could comprehend the divine intention. This includes the passing of time:

"L'esprit humain se rappelle ce que lui-même a fait dans un autre temps, en vertu des lois qui le font agir dans ce temps." (10)

The conception of time, and behaviour according to laws, is what distinguishes man from other beings. Darwin had replaced mythological time by a scientific conception thereof. Ballanche's ideal, biological time is a blend of both notions.

Ballanche says that the division of universal man is written down in the Bible, that the Genesis account explains creation to us, and that each primitive people has its own genesis. All these genesis accounts are attached to the primordial genesis. He upholds the belief in one original creation, which was the same for all people, but the recounting thereof has become different to various peoples and ages. Cosmogonic Christianity is not an inexpressable concept to Ballanche. Everything exists cosmogonically before it exists historically, from which we can deduce that the great Creator was there before anything else was created, and history with Him. Evolutive Christianity has engendered the establishment of man in his social state, and will eventually erase the boundaries of class and caste. All will be equal under common law, and everyone will be equally initiated, unlike the present state, when one class is initiated by the other.(11)

The gap between the ancient and the modern worlds will be bridged by a country as eternal as Egypt, and by such unique characters as Orphée, or Christ, who belonged to both divine and human worlds. There would be a synthesis of the old and the new, effected through the healing force of these "physicians". The transition from one world to another is a major happening, a great alteration, which happens over a

period of time, like an illness, that is gradually cured by a healer. (12) Man will always have the hope of an imminent return to health, which is the image Ballanche uses to symbolise the unity of essence. There will always be a Mediator to initiate man, in whatever culture or race he may be. This dogma is eternally identical in all theogonies and all cosmogonies.

Therefore man is condemned to an everlasting search, in quest of the reason for existence, for what has been, for what will be:

"L'esprit humain est tenu de chercher toujours, de chercher, même à présent, avec Pythagore, Socrate, Parménide, Timée, Platon, Zénon, Democrite, Epicure; avec Olympiodore, Salluste, Proclus; avec les Pères et les docteurs; il est tenu d'interroger les siècles, les fables, les traditions." (13)

Everywhere man will find instruments to aid him in his instruction. The earth, the firmament, other peoples, wise men from all times and places, the emblems and especially symbols of this world are all factors in his initiation. Man can learn everything that has happened in the past and everything about what he observes around him, the myth being his most valuable instrument of learning. All contributes to the knowledge of why we are. The missing details will all eventually be filled in, because we are successive and developing. Palingenesis will provide the answers about our being, and mythology will provide the answers about our past.

Although Ballanche values the validity of the intellect in an analysis of human beings, he believes in the sensual aspect of observations. The crucial difference between Ballanche and the dynasty of rationalists to which he brings an end, is this: Ballanche the idealist is not concerned with the detail regarding man's origins, nor with filling in events that characterised the past. Because time and matter to him are ideal, he gives an intuitive interpretation of history as a

process and is concerned only with proving that it is a dynamic event. Life is born from death, similarly one age is born from the other. Thesis and antithesis provide the impetus for a synthesis that starts the evolution of a new dialectic. Ballanche, like Hegel, attempts to unify opposites such as rationalism and idealism. He unites the intellect and the senses, the individual and the social, eternity and life on earth, Christian and pagan, in an original philosophico/historical analysis of social and cultural change.

Although Ballanche speaks of man as an individual, he rigorously applies everything concerning man to society or to a nation. Man can exist only in society, for the social state is the supreme humanising factor. It enables man to experience life communally and share his history with others. In order to give expression to his life, and especially to his past, man should communicate with his fellows. This act distinguishes him from animals, who also exist in groups, but are not aware that they share a common history or destiny. Ballanche's theory is based on communication, on establishing a common heritage with other men of his own age and with men of foregoing ages. The means to give stature to the past is language. By speaking and by writing down his past and his present, man is communicating in generally understood, intellectual terms, about what concerns him most. The communication of various peoples becomes another nineteenth century preoccupation, with the newly-discovered interest in the history of language. Philology and etymology are two sciences of the new age that did not concern the eighteenth century, for the simple reason that it did not have access to such a variety of ancient texts.

The possibility that there existed one archetypal language seemed attractive to Ballanche, who, at the start of many enquiries into the problem, stated that there must be an analogy between the primal unity of the universe and the existence of a unique primal tongue. In order to get closer



to the origin of language, Ballanche advocates a return to oral tradition, and a study of the time when men had an implicit belief in the continuity of their fate. He believes the oral tradition to keep the past in the present, while writing keeps the past in the past. By transferring tales of their past from one generation to another, merely by submitting these to memory, men showed that they had faith in the reality of a never-ending cycle of life following death. These ancient myths were the forerunners of history, says Ballanche, and should not be discarded because they are not always exactly the same. All ancient fables do indeed conform to a single pattern, of which they are simply variations. The far-away past was so remote that to a rich and fertile intellect it inspired many myths, all of which contain at least a fragment of truth, according to Ballanche. He came to the conclusion that he could employ any myth to entertain a host of ideas about the past. The one he chose was the Orpheus myth, because it had the advantage of possible multiple authorship, which would greatly support Ballanche's syncretist proposition that there should be more freedom in our allowance of foreign traditions into our own. Like many of the thinkers after him in the nineteenth century, Ballanche was open to comparatist studies, because he did not believe them to dispel the doctrine that there was one pattern to all life and death. Comparative studies rather reinforced the belief that there was similarity in apparent diversity.

The choice of Orpheus as the personification of his theory was a positive and happy one. Ballanche used the Dionysiac element in the Orpheus tradition to underline a feeling of enjoyment and exhilaration in existence. Nowhere does he despair of man's fate. Instead, he praises the start of a new age after the French Revolution, and so endows his writings with a positive tone. Realising that myths were concerned with the relationship between eternity and time on earth, Ballanche foreshadows the research of a contemporary thinker like the structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who

analyses cultural systems, like kinship and mythical systems, in terms of the structural relations among their elements, in Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté (1949). Ballanche's notion that myth is the essence of history, based on the belief that all myths throughout the world resemble each other, is echoed by the structuralist viewpoint that emphasises the similarities underlying all cultures.

Lévi-Strauss attempted to reduce the enormous amount of information about cultural systems to essentials, and then to establish a formal relationship among the elements. Cultures are systems of communication, he says, and like language, cultural systems consist of elements structured by the unconscious activity of the human mind. One such an element is the myth, which is analogous in pattern to linguistics. Myth is obviously related to questions about language, say both Ballanche and Lévi-Strauss, in his four volumes called Mythologies (1964-71), because it is a matter of human communication. Ballanche's theory of cultural changes is essentially one of communication and he finds a suitable vehicle for the demonstration thereof in mythology. Myth is also linked to matters of man's social life, another point made by both Ballanche, who may be seen as a precursor of the structuralists, and Lévi-Strauss, because the narration of myths is proper to a community and to communal tradition.

This hopeful doctrine is rooted in society and displays an interesting affinity with the budding sociological studies that evolved in the first half of the nineteenth century, developing into the positivism of Comte. Ballanche is advocating a more humane theory of social culture than Comte, because he links cultural interchange to the fluidity of symbolic expression. Hieroglyphics, symbols and poetry allow men to communicate more effectively on an intellectual level and allow them to be in touch with the mysteries of the universe. Ballanche's employ of the myth as an explanatory vehicle for the historic process and cosmic riddles anticipates the modern rebirth of the myth. The role of the archetype, which offers one original example to be copied by

subsequent ages, has become an important field of study in the twentieth century. Mircea Eliade is one exponent of the theory that myth should be the exclusive vehicle for the study of religion in The Myth of Eternal Return or Cosmos and History. Ballanche's application of the myth to primitive society is taken further by Eliade who applies it to modern society. Eliade continues the strand of Ballanche's theory that stresses myth to narrate sacred or traditional history, expressed in terms of religion.

Ballanche's modernity in the early nineteenth century has been overlooked by cultural historians. In the fields of historiography, philosophy, mythology and linguistics, he has an original contribution to make to the understanding of cultural changes. His attempt to start at the very beginning of creation and not leave out any of the links in the chain of mankind's past, is by no means new, but he shows a new awareness of the intercommunications between societies or cultures. He heralds a new age that would recognise the scientific validity of an Orphic or a mythopoetic interpretation of history, through simultaneously emphasising the fluidity of social structures and their essentially comparative nature in his theory of social palingenesis.

NOTES: CONCLUSION

(1)Orphée VIII, 153.

(2)Orphée VIII, 157.

(3)"L'homme est ainsi destiné à se compléter lui-même par les facultés sympathiques qui sont en lui." Orphée VIII, 153.

(4)"La diversité des esprits, dans le monde actuel, est une image et une analogie de la diversité qui règnera dans le monde futur." *ibid.*

(5)"L'homme, après avoir subi les influences des éléments, fera-t-il subir aux éléments sa propre influence? L'homme régénéré régènera-t-il la terre?" Orphée VIII, 164.

(6)Orphée IX, 202.

(7)"Il comparait ensemble la vie des sociétés humaines et la vie de l'homme lui-même, toutes les deux, étranges et mystérieuses, avec des périodes analogues; toutes les deux finissant par la mort, qui n'est qu'une transformation." Orphée IX, 203.

(8)"Les oiseaux du ciel, les animaux de la terre, les arbres des forêts, les herbes des champs, les météores légers de l'air, tout s'animait à mes yeux de la même pensée, la pensée d'une immense régénération, d'une vaste palingénésie." Orphée IX, 212.

(9)*ibid.*

(10)Epilogue, 262.

(11)"la rédemption, qui est contemporaine de la faute, produit l'initiation des classes, les une par les autres." Epilogue, 268.

(12)"Cette altération immense et intime fut considérée, par la croyance unanime des peuples, comme une maladie qui devait avoir un terme, et pour laquelle ils n'ont jamais cessé d'invoquer des guérisseurs." Epilogue, 270.

(13)Epilogue, 229.

APPENDIX I:

During the sixteenth, seventeenth and much of the eighteenth century, Europe's knowledge about Islam and Eastern religions came mainly from travellers, for the most part missionaries, who did not esteem these traditions very highly. Catchphrases and key words, like apathy, void, nothingness, annihilation and nirvana, became current in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, inspiring polemics without a commensurate factual enquiry. The Age of Enlightenment preferred to scorn the Indian beliefs, for example, Voltaire, who wrote in the Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations that they were merely coarse nourishment for the common people. Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) called them bizarre notions about nothingness in his Dictionnaire historique et critique (1696-7). In England, John Foster who in the Eclectic Review of September 1810:

"In the Ramayana all is pure meaningless raving. An imagination which seems to combine the advantages of mania, superstition, and drunkenness, is put a-going, makes a set of what it names worlds of its own, and fills them with all sorts of agents; gods, sages, demi-gods, monkeys, and a numberless diversity of fantastic entities..." \*

Among the first solid information passed to Europe, concerning the Eastern religions, was a book by La Coubère, ambassador from Louis XIV to the king of Siam (1687-8), who published his On the kingdom of Siam in Paris in 1691, in which he commented on nirvana as a way of being for the soul. It was only a century after that penetrating observations were made again, notably by Sir William Jones in his Sanskrit studies, which opened the way for scientific investigations.

\* in Garrett, John: A Classical Dictionary of India;  
Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, Graz, 1971, p vii.

The early 1800s witnessed the distinction of scientific vis à vis fabulous interpretation of Eastern religions. Regular instruction in Sanskrit began in Western Europe in 1814 with Antoine-Léonard de Chézy's professorship of "la langue et la littérature des Sanskrites ... au Collège royal de France." The greatest influence on Sanskrit and Buddhist studies in Europe in the nineteenth century, was Eugène Burnouf (1801-52), son of the French classicist Jean-Louis Burnouf. He translated the Saddharmapundarikam (Le Lotus de la bonne loi) in French in 1852, as it constituted the most representative of the manuscripts in Paris. In his Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien (1844), Burnouf established a critical analysis of Indian thought and language. His over-all attitude to their importance and value is to be found in the "Discours d'ouverture: De la langue et de la littérature sanskrite", read at the Collège de France in February 1833:

"We should not close our eyes to the most brilliant light that may ever have come from the Orient...It is India, with its philosophy and myths, its literature and laws, that we study in its language. It is more than India gentlemen, it is a page from the origins of the world, of the primitive history of the human spirit, that we shall try to decipher together...It is our profound conviction that the study of words without the study of ideas is - if possible - useless and frivolous...There is no true philology without philosophy and history." \*

It is significant to note the date of Burnouf's Paris statement, 1833, at a time when Ballanche had just recently completed his Orphée and the Palingénésie Sociale. Ballanche had before then grasped the importance of Islam and Sanskrit in the determination of history, and had also established the link with philology.

\* Quoted from La Revue des Deux Mondes, t. 1er, 2e série, 1833, pp 264-78, in The Buddhist Nirvana and its Western interpreters, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968.

It is illuminating to note some of the English publications that appeared in the early nineteenth century on Islam. John Garrett, in A Classical Dictionary of India, illustrative of the mythology philosophy literature antiquities arts manners customs etc. of the Hindus (Akademische Druck-u.Verlagsanstalt, Graz, 1971, first edition 1871) provides a list, unfortunately without the authors' initials, but nevertheless valuable in that they are titled and dated, and indicate the awakening interest in matters Islamic. Some of the earliest works are:

Adelung: Historical Sketch of Sanskrit Literature,  
Oxford, 1832.

Asiatic Researches, 11 volumes, London, 1812.

Ainslie: Materia Indica, 2 volumes, London, 1826.

Buchanan, F: Journey through Mysore, etc., 3 volumes,  
London, 1807.

Carey: Ramayana, Serampore, 1806.

Dubois: Manners and Customs of People of India, London,  
1817.

Elphinstone: Caul, Account of, London, 1815.

Forbes: Oriental Memoirs, 2 volumes, London, 1834.

Kennedy, Vans, Col.: Researches into the nature and affinity of Ancient and Hindu mythology, London,  
1831.

Moor: Hindu Pantheon, London, 1810.

Ward: View of the history, literature and mythology of the Hindus, 3 volumes, London, 1822.

Wilson: Sanskrit and English Dictionary, Calcutta, 1840.

APPENDIX II:

Works on Egypt and travelogues abounded in the nineteenth century. While it is impossible to ascertain the publications Ballanche was familiar with, one can assume that those books published in France were topics of discussion in Ballanche's literary circle, in particular the salon of Madame Récamier. A list of English, French, Italian and German books published at the time of the writing of the Orphée, is selected from the bibliography provided by Peter A Clayton in The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt - Artists and travellers in the nineteenth century (Thames and Hudson, London, 1982):

Athanasii, G d': Researches and Discoveries in Upper Egypt under the direction of Henry Salt Esq.; London, 1836.

Belzoni, G: Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia; and of a Journey to the Coast of the Red Sea, in search of the Ancient Berenice; and another to the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon; London, 1820.

Forty-four Plates illustrative of the Researches and Operations of Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia; London, 1820.

Six new Plates; London, 1822.

Bossi, S and Cooper, E J: Views of Egypt and Nubia; London, 1822.

Burckhardt, J L: Travels in Nubia; London, 1819.

Caillaud, F: Voyage à l'Oasis de Thèbes...1815-1818; Paris, 1821.

Champollion, J F: Lettre à M Dacier...; Paris, 1822.

Lettres écrites de l'Egypte; Paris, 1833. . .

Monuments de l'Egypte et de la Nubie; Paris, 1845.

Champollion-Figeac, M: L'Obélisque de Louqsor transporté à Paris; Paris, 1833.

Combes, E: Voyage en Egypte, en Nubie; Paris, 1846.

De Montule, E: Travels in Egypt in 1818 and 1819; London, 1823.



- Denon, D V: Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte;  
Paris, 1802.  
Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt; transl. A Aiken,  
London, 1803.
- De Verninac Saint-Maur, E: Voyage du Luxor; Paris, 1835.
- Forbin, L N P A: Voyage dans le Levant; Paris, 1819.
- Gau, F C: Antiquités de la Nubie, ou Monuments inédits  
des bords du Nil, entre la première et la deuxième  
cataracte; Paris, 1824.
- Grobert, J F L: Description des pyramides de Ghizé...;  
Paris, 1801.
- Halls, J J: Henry Salt; London, 1834.
- Hamilton, W: Aegyptiaca; London, 1809.
- Head, C F: Eastern and Egyptian Scenery, Ruins, etc...;  
London, 1833.
- Irby, J and Mangles, C: Travels in Egypt and Nubia;  
London, 1823.
- Jomard, E: Description de l'Egypte; Paris, n.d., c.1812.  
Recueil d'observations et de mémoires sur l'Egypte;  
Paris, n.d., c.1812.
- Jones, O: Views on the Nile; London, 1843.
- Lebas, J B A: L'Obélisque de Luxor; Paris, 1839.
- Legh, T: Narrative of a Journey in Egypt and the country  
beyond the cataracts; London, 1816.
- L'Hôte, N: L'Obélisque de Louqsor; Paris, 1836.  
Lettres de l'Egypte; Paris, 1840.
- Mayer, L: Views in Egypt; London, 1804.
- Panckoucke, C L F (publisher): Description de l'Egypte  
ou recueil des observations et des recherches qui  
ont été faites en Egypte pendant l'expédition de  
l'armée française; Paris, 1808. Second edition 1823  
24 volumes: 1-5 Antiquités descriptions  
6-10 Antiquités mémoires
- Reybaud, L: Histoire de l'expédition française en Egypte  
Paris, 1828.
- Rifaud, J J: Voyages 1805-1827; Paris, 1830.
- Rosellini, L: I Monumenti dell'Egitto e della Nubia;  
Pisa, 1832.

St John, J A: Egypt and Nubia; London, 1845.

Vyse, H and Perring, J S: Operations carried on at the  
Pyramids of Gizeh; 3 volumes, London, 1840-2.

Wilkinson, J G: General View of Egypt; London, 1835.

In addition, several articles and a wealth of cross-references on Egypt appeared in the eighteenth century Encyclopédie, published by Panckoucke. This was a certain source of information for Ballanche, and it is notable that articles on the following selected topics appeared, amongst others:

- Monuments et merveilles de l'Egypte:
  - Province où se trouvaient les principales merveilles.
  - Le labyrinthe.
  - Les pyramides.
  - C'est en Egypte que la construction des temples prit naissance.
  - Temples remarquables dans l'ancienne Egypte.
  - Des monnaies & médailles anciennes de ce pays.
  - Figure symbolique de l'Egypte.
- Histoire d'Egypte:
  - Fables dont l'histoire des Egyptiens se trouvait chargée.
  - Dynasties Egyptiennes.
  - Royaumes d'Egypte.
  - État de splendeur de l'Egypte ancienne, mis en parallèle avec son état présent.
  - Chrétiens d'Egypte.
  - Les sectes de la Grèce s'établirent successivement dans l'ancien Egypte.
  - Comment les prêtres conservèrent le mélange de la philosophie orientale avant Jésus-Christ, acheva de défigurer la religion chrétienne.
  - Theut, fondateur de la sagesse égyptienne.
  - De l'institution des prêtres.
  - Causes de l'enrichissement des prêtres.
  - L'Egypte fut superstitieux pendant tous les temps mais elle ne le fut jamais plus qu'aux temps des

derniers hiérophantes.

- Doctrine, fonctions & habillement des prêtres.
- Le culte qu'ils rendaient aux autres êtres de la nature.
- Leurs principes de cosmogonie.
- Leur maxime fut de ne rejeter aucune superstition étrangère.
- De l'antiquité des Egyptiens:
  - Comment les annales égyptiennes peuvent être réduites à notre chronologie.
  - Observations qui prouvent la haute antiquité des Egyptiens.
- De la religion:
  - Origine de l'idolâtrie des Egyptiens.
  - Mythologie des Egyptiens, antiquité de leurs fables religieuses.
  - Vénération pour Jupiter-Ammon.
  - Les Egyptiens attachés à leurs dieux n'ont jamais embrassé de cultes étrangers; mais les nations étrangères ont souvent adopté leurs cultes.
- Arts et sciences:
  - Ancienne langue des Egyptiens, langue cophte.
  - Si l'ancien Egyptien est dérivé de l'Hebreu.
  - Différentes sortes d'écritures qu'ils ont eues.
  - De l'usage qu'ils ont fait des hiéroglyphes.
  - Manière de calculer des Egyptiens.
  - Année égyptienne.
  - L'année solaire trouvée par eux.
  - Différentes ères qu'ils ont suivies depuis la mort d'Alexandre.
  - De l'astronomie des Egyptiens.
  - Caractère de leur philosophie.
  - Origine de la métempsychose parmi eux.
  - Rapport de leur doctrine avec celle des Orientaux sur la métempsychose.
  - Comment le dogme monstrueux de l'âme du monde passa des Grecs aux Egyptiens.
  - Leur opinion sur l'état des âmes après la mort.

- Jugement qu'ils prononçaient sur les morts, funérailles des Egyptiens.
- Leur origine est incertaine. Pourquoi on leur a donné le nom d'égyptiens.

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Destutt de Tracy	vol 9, 194
Eliade	vol 15, 632
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Evolution	vol 7, 7-8
Hegel	vol 8, 731-2
Hieroglyphics	vol 8, 856-7
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